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ABSTRACT

This evaluation of the 1989-90 BRIDGE Project, a dropout prevention program in Hartford (Connecticut), found that grade 9 students felt a heightened sense of control over their lives after one year in the program. BRIDGE is a multifaceted program that focuses on reducing the disengagement of at-risk students facing the critical transition from middle school to high school. Special incentives include opportunities for early promotion from grade 7 to grade 9 and a subsidized employment internship while finishing high school. Evaluation information was drawn from the following sources: (1) student information; (2) a Locus of Control Test (LOC); (3) an Attitude toward School survey; (4) interviews with supervisors of working interns; and (5) participant follow-up studies. The following summary conclusions are presented: (1) 65 percent of the participants were promoted to the next grade, despite a 50-100 percent probability of dropping out due to previous retentions; (2) one-third of the participants who had been retained were promoted to the next grade, despite a 100 percent probability of dropping out; and (3) participants expressed an increased "connectedness" with school. Recommendations include monitoring excessive absenteeism, developing more academic support options, and expanding the mentoring component. Statistical data are presented in 31 tables. A list of 21 references and a glossary are included. (FMW)

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EVALUATION OF THE BRIDGE PROGRAM

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SUBMITTED TO:
Mr. Joseph Ierna
Senior Vice President

Ms. Robin White
Director of Research and Education

Greater Hartford Chamber of Commerce

SUBMITTED BY:
WORDS + NUMBERS RESEARCH

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GLOSSARY

TERM	INTERPRETATION
BRIDGE	The BRIDGE Program
HPS	Hartford Public Schools
QMS	Quirk Middle School
HPHS	Hartford Public High School
FMS	Fox Middle School
WHS	Weaver High School
FES	Fox Elementary School
BHS	Bulkeley High School
TAPP	Teenage Pregnancy Program
GHCC	Greater Hartford Chamber of Commerce
df	Degrees of freedom
p	Probability level
Chi Sq	Chi Square Statistic
F	F ratio used with ANOVA
t	t statistic used with t-tests
$\overline{X}$	Arithmetic average/mean
n	Subgroup of scores/subjects
N	Total number of scores/subjects
Mean	Arithmetic average, $\overline{X}$
SD	Standard deviation
NS	Not statistically significant

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1.00 BACKGROUND

1.10 THE CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL

Dropping out of school prior to the 12th grade is disturbing to many Americans. They expect youngsters to continue their education through the senior year even though youth legally must be educated until the age of 16.

More distressing is the fact that some youth drop out prior to the age of 16. Called "early school leavers", these students represent a disproportionate number of non-white children and children from homes of a lower socio-economic status (Hammack, 1986).

Most researchers concur that there are several correlates of dropping out. Those mentioned frequently are race, socio-economic status, school ability, performance and absenteeism. It is also acknowledged that dropping out of school is a process rather than a point in time. Students become continually frustrated, perceiving themselves as ineffective and powerless in school settings, and withdraw from school (Ford, 1987). School tasks such as reading, studying or completing assignments/tests do not present themselves as satisfying. The alternative to failure and alienation in school is dropping out (Elliot and Voss, 1974).

The process of withdrawing from school can be traced to as early as the kindergarten through 3rd grades. Spivack and Cianci (1987) found correlations between behavior ratings in early grades and misconduct by the same of youth at ages 14-15.

A current theory, is advanced by Finn (1989). In describing the withdrawal process, he identifies steps such as truancy, absenteeism, dropping out and then delinquency as part and parcel of this phenomenon. Finn states that the extent to which a youngster identifies with school is related to such behaviors. The critical intervention, this researcher concludes, is for programs to be directed at increasing and maintaining the student's "connectedness" with school. This concept means bonding and belonging; whereas, the reverse is alienation, detachment and self-estrangement.

Programs which foster the sense of belonging to the school have the following attributes:

1. Positive teacher attitudes toward the potential success of marginal students.

2. Teaching practices that involve students in the learning process to a much greater degree than traditional teaching practices which isolate students at-risk.

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3. A diversified curricula with objectives that are relevant to the needs of students, neither too easy nor too difficult, and with a vocational component.

4. Small, perhaps separate, schools for students at-risk.

5. Flexible school rules that do not alienate students.

6. Disciplinary procedures that are viewed as fair and effective.

7. Evaluation and reward systems that are compatible with abilities and interests of students.

8. Positions of responsibility for students who are allowing them to participate in decisions.

Reducing the dropping out process will become more formidable as the next decade approaches. At the turn of the century, the number of black children, aged 5-17, will increase by 19%. Hispanic populations in the same age group will grow by 42%. Asians and other ethnicities will increase 27%. At the same time Caucasians, ages 5-17, will increase 5%. This means that populations at highest risk for dropping out of school will grow dramatically. As two forecasts in recent editions of The Futurist, warn:

> "The number of students at-risk of dropping out of school will increase as academic standards rise and social problems (drug abuse, teenage pregnancy) intensify."
>
> and
>
> "The urban minority underclass will continue to grow, but their situation will not be improved by general economic growth."

1.20 THE CITY OF HARTFORD: A RESPONSE

The school-aged population of 5-17 year olds in Hartford is predominately non-white. Many of these children come from low-income households. Alone, these two factors signal a high-risk segment for dropping out of school. Recognizing this challenge, leaders from The Greater Hartford Chamber of Commerce membership and personnel from the Hartford Public Schools (HPS) created a collaborative venture to stem the tide of dropouts in that city.

According to a recent article published in The School Administrator and written by Hartford Superintendent of Schools, Hernan LaFontaine, the initiative resulted in a 3.3 percentage point decline in the Hartford public school dropout rate during 1987-1988 - "the lowest rate in a decade and the most significant annual reduction ever in the number of dropouts" (p. 38).

The program credited with that effect is Project BRIDGE.

1.30 PROJECT BRIDGE

Project BRIDGE began by another name, Project SAVE. The original name reflected its mission - to keep the students at Quirk Middle School from dropping out as they faced the end of middle school careers and had to make the critical transition toward Hartford Public High School. Administrators and teachers found that this was a critical time when disengagement from school was a threat. The concept of bridging the gap between the 7th/8th grade and the 9th grade created a permanent name for the program.

From the vantage point of a dropout one of the greatest incentives in the BRIDGE program design was the opportunity to receive an early promotion from the 7th grade to the 9th grade. A second attractive incentive was an opportunity to receive a subsidized employment internship or even a job in the private sector, while finishing high school.

The BRIDGE program has been in existence since 1985-1986, when 31 students were the original cohort group at QMS. After that time the BRIDGE included 3 pairs of schools, each pair having a middle school component (a feeder school) and a high school component (a receiver school). These three pairs are as follows:

1. QUIRK MIDDLE SCHOOL (QMS) and
   HARTFORD PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL (HPHS)

2. FOX MIDDLE SCHOOL (FMS) and
   WEAVER HIGH SCHOOL (WHS)

3. MICHAEL D. FOX ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (FES) and
   BULKELEY HIGH SCHOOL (BHS)

The BRIDGE has been evaluated every year from 1986, 1987, 1988 and the current year by **WORDS + NUMBERS RESEARCH**. In 1989, it was evaluated by Dr. Robert C. Williams.

Please refer to those evaluation reports for a complete description of program implementation and history. Also, the journal article written by Dr. LaFontaine represents an accurate description of BRIDGE. It is included as Appendix A in this report as a reference.

2.00 OVERVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Many evaluation designs employ a combination of qualitative and quantitative data to present a well-rounded picture of a program under review. The BRIDGE evaluation for the 1989-90 school year attempted to utilize this strategy. Several data collection methods and tools were used to generate data about the BRIDGE program and its participants.

2.10 DESCRIPTIVE PROFILE SHEETS

A profile sheet was generated for 452 BRIDGE students. This form was designed and used in the 1988-89 Evaluation. The tool requests demographic data on gender, ethnicity, siblings, offspring, household composition and other characteristics as well as information on current grade level, school, and other background information.

For each student, a numeric Identification Number was assigned to assure confidentiality. Data were coded into SPSS, a statistical package for data analysis and aggregated for reporting purposes.

As a note, some of the 452 cases experienced missing data, not an uncommon occurrence in evaluation research. Therefore, totals in several tables will not equal 452. In many cases, it was felt that reporting the information with this acknowledged limitation was more desirable than eliminating the information altogether.

2.20 PAPER AND PENCIL INSTRUMENTS

There were three paper and pencil instruments that a sub-sample of 1989-90 BRIDGE students (N=71) completed as well as a segment (N=12) of the first cohort of BRIDGE 1985-86.

The Locus of Control Test (LOC), used previously in BRIDGE evaluations and approved for use by the HPS, was administered in September and June to determine if participants perceived a greater sense of control over their lives/future. This test is described in Section 4.00 and is located in Appendix B.

Students (71) who took the LOC were asked four open-ended questions on an attached sheet.

:Why did you join BRIDGE?
:What do you like best about BRIDGE?
:What would you change if you could about BRIDGE?
:Would you recommend BRIDGE to a friend?

An Attitude Toward School survey was administered to the 12 students who comprised the original BRIDGE cohort. This instrument

is located in Appendix F.

2.30 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH SUPERVISORS

In-depth interviews were conducted with supervisors of BRIDGE students who held after-school jobs. A list of 38 supervisors was provided to Dr. Susan Carroll who conducted 31 interviews (82%). Students, rated on a five-point scale, were evaluated on aspects of job behaviors such as:

:ability to produce work
:ability to learn the task
:job preparation
:communication
:motivation
:overall performance

Suggestions for program improvement were requested along with other qualitative data.

2.40 RETROSPECTIVE ON STUDENT STATUS AT END OF SCHOOL YEAR

A retrospective study was undertaken to determine what happened to BRIDGE students at the end of the school year. For each of the 452 students one of the following categories of outcome was designated:

Promoted
Retained
Dropped out
Transferred to other educational program
Moved/Relocated
Returned to regular education/classroom

Profile data were applied to these categories to determine what factors, at least partially, explained group segments.

2.50 RETROSPECTIVE ON ORIGINAL COHORT OF BRIDGE STUDENTS

A retrospective study of the 31 students who comprised the original BRIDGE cohort was conducted through qualitative interviews with key persons. Information on the outcome of each student was garnered and speculation was rendered as to what facilitated or restrained high school completion for this important first group.

3.00 PROFILE OF BRIDGE STUDENTS

3.10 HOW MANY HPS STUDENTS WERE SERVED BY BRIDGE IN 1989-1990?

During the 1989-1990 school years BRIDGE served 452 students in the Hartford public schools (HPS). The number of BRIDGE students served varied by individual school and by pairs of schools, as Table 1 below documents.

TABLE 1

BRIDGE STUDENTS BY SCHOOL AND PAIR

SCHOOL	N	% by Pair	% by Total	% of TOTAL
QMS	52	24%	12%	
HPHS	169	76%	37%	49%
SUB-TOTAL	221	100%		
FMS	50	34%	11%	
WHS	96	66%	21%	32%
SUB-TOTAL	146	100%		
FES	21	25%	5%	
BHS	64	75%	14%	19%
SUB-TOTAL	85	100%		
TOTAL	**452**		**100%**	**100%**

The largest numbers of BRIDGE students (169) were served at HPHS. This represents 37% of the entire population of 452 of BRIDGE students. If QMS students are added, this pair alone accounts for half (49%) of all BRIDGE students. The second largest pair is FMS/WHS where 146 or 32% of all BRIDGE students are served. The smallest pair is FES/BHS, composed of 85 or 19% of the BRIDGE segment.

3.11 Grade Levels By School

Approximately a quarter of the BRIDGE pairs are composed of middle school students, while 3 of four are high school students. This is illustrated more clearly by grade level and school breakdown, depicted in Table 2. About 27% of all BRIDGE students are

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7th or 8th graders, the remainder are "high schoolers", mostly 9th (47%) and 10th (17%) graders.

The proportions by grade levels and between schools look very close with one exception. There is only one school with 12th grade BRIDGE students. This is HPHS, the receiver school for the very first cohort of BRIDGE students from QMS.

TABLE 2

GRADE LEVEL AND SCHOOL

GRADE LEVEL	ALL N (%)	QMS N (%)	HPHS N (%)	FMS N (%)	WHS N (%)	FES N (%)	BHS N (%)
7	113 (25)	45 (87)	----	48 (96)	----	20 (95)	----
8	10 (2)	7 (13)	----	2 (4)	----	1 (5)	----
9	211 (47)	----	114 (68)	----	58 (60)	----	39 (61)
10	78 (17)	----	34 (20)	----	27 (28)	----	17 (27)
11	32 (7)	----	13 (8)	----	11 (12)	----	8 (13)
12	8 (2)	----	8 (5)	----	----	----	----

3.20 WHAT ARE THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF BRIDGE STUDENTS?

3.21 Ethnicity/Race By School

School-aged population in Hartford is largely non-white. The ethnic/racial composition of BRIDGE students naturally reflects this fact. Forty-seven percent are Black, 47% are Hispanic, 5% are Caucasian and 1% are other ethnicities. Please refer to Table 3.

By school, data analysis on race documents statistically significant differences, probably characterizing neighborhoods where students are drawn. At QMS, HPHS, FES and BHS there are more Hispanic students than there are Black students. The reverse is true at FMS and WHS. While 80% of the BRIDGE students from those two schools are Black, only a quarter are Black from the other four schools.

There are no white BRIDGE students at either WHS or FMS. Between 5-10 Caucasian students are found as BRIDGE members at each of the other four schools. Again, ethnic diversity of neighborhoods

accounts for differences in BRIDGE makeup.

TABLE 3

ETHNICITY AND SCHOOL

ETHNICITY	ALL N (%)	QMS N (%)	HPHS N (%)	FMS N (%)	WHS N (%)	FES N (%)	BHS N (%)
Hispanic	212 (47)	35 (67)	98 (58)	10 (20)	12 (13)	13 (62)	44 (69)
Black	213 (47)	13 (25)	56 (33)	40 (80)	84 (87)	5 (24)	15 (23)
Caucasian	23 (5)	3 (6)	13 (8)	----	----	2 (10)	5 (8)
Asian	1 (--)	----	1 (.5)	----	----	----	----
Indian	1 (--)	----	1 (.5)	----	----	----	----
Other	2 (--)	1 (2)	----	----	----	1 (5)	----

(Chi Sq=143.57, df=25, p=.00)**

3.22 Gender

Three of every five BRIDGE students is a boy and this is true by school. Since males are at higher risk for dropping out than females are, this finding appears desirable.

There were no statistically significant differences on gender among the six schools. In general, 60% of BRIDGE students are male while 40% are female. BHS has the most equivalence between gender with a 50/50 ratio although it was not significantly different. Please refer to Table 4.

TABLE 4

GENDER AND SCHOOL

GENDER	ALL N (%)	QMS N (%)	HPHS N (%)	FMS N (%)	WHS N (%)	FES N (%)	BHS N (%)
Male	269 (60)	30 (58)	101 (60)	32 (64)	61 (64)	13 (62)	32 (50)
Female	183 (40)	22 (42)	68 (40)	18 (36)	35 (36)	8 (38)	32 (50)

(Chi Sq=3.59, df=5, p=.61)NS

3.23 Age

Students at-risk for dropping out are usually older than their peers in the same grade level. This is due to the likelihood of retention (or even multiple retentions) at a grade level. The BRIDGE students are indeed an older segment of students since they have stayed back at least once.

At the middle school level, 7th and 8th graders usually are 12 or 13 years old. For BRIDGE, most are 14 or 15 years of age. Only a sprinkling (5) are 13 years of age. The same findings occur at the high school level. Whereas most 9th and 10th graders are 14 or 15 years of age, BRIDGE students are 15 or 16 years of age.

When the seventh graders were compared by school to determine whether differences in age exists, there was none. For QMS, FES and FMS, the mean/average age for 7th graders was 14. ($F=.16$, $df=2,93$, $p=.85$) When the ninth graders were compared by school to determine whether differences on age existed, there also was none. The average age for HPHS, WHS and BHS ninth graders was 16. ($F=.63$, $df=2,202$, $p=.54$)

At both middle and high school sites it is clear that the BRIDGE student is at least one year older than peers in the same grade level. This extra year likely symbolizes a grade retention and indicates the existence of a high-risk factor for dropping out.

Please refer to Table 5.

TABLE 5

AGE BY SCHOOL

AGE	ALL N (%)	QMS N (%)	HPHS N (%)	FMS N (%)	WHS N (%)	FES N (%)	BHS N (%)
13	5 (01)	----	----	2 (4)	----	3 (17)	----
14	94 (22)	28 (70)	12 (7)	34 (72)	4 (4)	10 (56)	6 (10)
15	136 (32)	11 (28)	56 (34)	10 (21)	32 (35)	4 (22)	23 (38)
16	119 (28)	1 (3)	64 (38)	1 (2)	31 (34)	1 (6)	21 (34)
17	56 (13)	----	20 (12)	----	25 (27)	----	11 (18)
18	15 (4)	----	15 (9)	----	----	----	----

3.30 FAMILY BACKGROUND AND CHARACTERISTICS

3.31 Household Composition

Household composition of BRIDGE students represents another area where high-risk is documented. Only one-third of the program participants live with both parents. These statistics reflect national data where it is estimated that 38% of non-white children live with two parents. More common in BRIDGE is the one-parent household. For 61% of the BRIDGE students living with a single parent is the norm.

About 5% of the BRIDGE students live with other relatives such as a grandmother, aunt or guardian. This is true at each of the 6 schools. This statistic is lower than average for Black children (12%) but comparable to national statistics for Hispanics youth (5%).

Although no statistically significant differences emerge among the schools, the 70% rate of single-parent household at QMS and BHS is noteworthy. BRIDGE students with the greatest advantage regarding household composition are at FES, where 47% live with two parents. Please refer to Table 6.

TABLE 6

NUMBER OF PARENTS IN HOUSEHOLD

NUMBER OF PARENTS	ALL N (%)	QMS N (%)	HPHS N (%)	FMS N (%)	WHS N (%)	FES N (%)	BHS N (%)
None	22 (5)	3 (6)	7 (4)	2 (5)	5 (5)	2 (12)	3 (5)
One	260 (61)	33 (70)	99 (59)	25 (63)	56 (60)	7 (41)	40 (67)
Two	143 (34)	11 (23)	61 (37)	13 (32)	33 (35)	8 (47)	17 (28)

(Chi Sq=7.43, df=10, p=.68)NS

3.32 Siblings

Family size for BRIDGE students is much larger than the typical American household. U.S. households have 1.8 children on the average. In the BRIDGE program, there are on the average 4 children per family.

There were statistically significant differences by schools and for pairs of schools. At QMS and HPHS there were significantly larger families with 3-4 siblings reported by BRIDGE students. FMS and WHS students in BRIDGE appear to have 2-3 siblings per household, one child less than others. Regardless, the family

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size for BRIDGE is larger than the national average, again contributing to a risk factor for dropping out. Please refer to Table 7.

TABLE 7

NUMBER OF SIBLINGS BY HOUSEHOLD

SCHOOL	MEAN	(SD)	MEDIAN	MODE
All	3.19	(1.9)	3.0	2.0
QMS	3.86	(1.9)	3.0	2.0
HPHS	3.45	(2.2)	3.0	2.0
FMS	2.14	(1.6)	2.0	1.0
WHS	2.90	(1.5)	3.0	2.0
FES	3.27	(2.7)	3.0	3.0
BHS	3.02	(1.5)	3.0	3.0

(F=4.19, df=5,372, p=.00)**

Birth order across school was similar. BRIDGE students are frequently the "middle child", possibly the second born. The median value on order of birth was 2.0. There were no statistically significant differences for order of birth across school. Please refer to Table 8.

TABLE 8

ORDER OF BIRTH

SCHOOL	MEAN	(SD)	MEDIAN	MODE
All	2.57	(1.7)	2.0	1.0
QMS	2.72	(1.9)	2.0	1.0
HPHS	2.73	(2.0)	2.0	1.0
FMS	2.17	(1.3)	2.0	1.0
WHS	2.21	(1.4)	2.0	1.0
FES	2.64	(2.5)	2.0	2.0
BHS	2.29	(1.2)	2.0	2.0

(F=1.38, df=5,351, p=.23)

3.33 Number of Offspring/Children

While BRIDGE students (89%) are not parents, teenage pregnancy is a problem that has not eluded the City of Hartford or BRIDGE. About 1 of every 10 BRIDGE students is a parent. What is alarming is that there are no statistically significant differences among the six schools. This means that there are proportional similarities for middle and high schools alike. The data support this fact.

At the middle school level, there are 5 parents at QMS; three parents at FMS; and one parent at FES. At the high schools, there are 17 parents at HPHS; 11 parents at WHS; and 5 parents at BHS. Additionally, 6 of these parents have more than one child; and four parents are middle school students.

Student parents have a high propensity for dropping out. Additional household requirements such as child care contribute toward a "pulling away" from school.

Please refer to Table 9.

TABLE 9

NUMBER OF OFFSPRING

NUMBER OF CHILDREN	ALL N (%)	QMS N (%)	HPHS N (%)	FMS N (%)	WHS N (%)	FES N (%)	BHS N (%)
None	348 (89)	41 (89)	144 (89)	32 (91)	80 (88)	20 (95)	49 (91)
One	35 (9)	3 (7)	14 (9)	1 (3)	11 (12)	1 (5)	5 (9)
Two+	6 (2)	2 (4)	3 (2)	2 (6)	----	----	----

Between Schools (F=.50, df=5,402, p=.78)
Between Middle Schools (F=.51, df=2,99, p=.60)
Between High Schools (F=.17, df=2,303, p=.85)

3.34 Educational Attainment Of Parents

The educational background of the parents of BRIDGE students offers some hope. The majority of students (59%) have parents who either completed high school (48%) or have the benefit of some college education (11%). Since parental educational attainment is positively related to staying in school, this is good news.

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On the other hand, 17% have less than 8 years of formal schooling and 25% did not complete high school. For this segment of BRIDGE students, a role model in the home for high school completion is absent. This situation exists for 2 of every 5 BRIDGE students.

There are significant differences between schools on educational attainment of parents. For FMS and WHS, parents have the benefit of more education. Over 70% of BRIDGE parents at these two schools are high school graduates. On the other hand, more than half of the parents of BHS and HPHS BRIDGE students have not completed high school. Better role modeling for high school completion exists for the BRIDGE students at WHS and FMS compared to the other schools.

Please refer to Table 10.

TABLE 10

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF PARENTS

EDUCATION LEVEL	ALL N (%)	QMS N (%)	HPHS N (%)	FMS N (%)	WHS N (%)	FES N (%)	BHS N (%)
None	3 (1)	----	2 (2)	1 (4)	----	----	----
Element.	46 (16)	4 (13)	23 (20)	----	9 (10)	1 (13)	9 (32)
Some HS	73 (25)	10 (32)	33 (29)	4 (17)	15 (17)	2 (25)	9 (32)
HS Grad.	140 (48)	12 (39)	48 (42)	17 (71)	52 (58)	4 (50)	7 (25)
College	31 (11)	5 (16)	8 (7)	2 (8)	13 (15)	1 (12)	2 (7)
College+	1 (--)	----	----	----	----	----	1 (4)

(F=3.76, df=5,288, p=.00)**

3.35 Primary Language Spoken At Home

Over half of the BRIDGE students (58%) report that English is the primary language spoken at home. In 25% of the BRIDGE households, Spanish is the first language. The remaining 12% report that English and another language is spoken.

The extent to which Spanish is spoken in the homes of BRIDGE students is somewhat masked by the statistics but not by raw numbers. Approximately 212 students are Hispanic. Of those, 115 (54%) report that Spanish is spoken as the primary language at home. This means that for every other Hispanic BRIDGE student, Spanish not English is used at home. Additionally, 12% or 53

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BRIDGE students report that English and another language is spoken at home. In the majority of cases this second language is Spanish.

From a statistical point-of-view there are predictable differences by school on language spoken at home. Naturally, WHS (89%) and FMS (85%) speak English at home. At these schools over 80% of the student body is Black. Conversely, Spanish is spoken more often at QMS, HPHS and BHS where there are more Hispanic students.

Please refer to Table 11.

TABLE 11

LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN THE HOME

LANGUAGE	ALL N (%)	QMS N (%)	HPHS N (%)	FMS N (%)	WHS N (%)	FES N (%)	BHS N (%)
English	261 (58)	19 (39)	82 (49)	39 (85)	84 (89)	9 (53)	28 (46)
Spanish	115 (25)	15 (31)	55 (33)	6 (13)	6 (6)	3 (18)	30 (49)
Eng/Other	53 (12)	15 (31)	25 (15)	1 (2)	4 (4)	5 (29)	3 (5)
Other	5 (1)	----	5 (3)	----	----	----	----

(Chi Sq=98.13, df=15, p=.00)**

3.36 Employment Status Of Parents

Almost 70% of all BRIDGE students have one parent who is employed. However, a large segment (30%) have no source of employment income whatsoever. Considering the family sizes reported previously, this likely creates financial hardship for one-third of the BRIDGE student population. (This percentage may be an underestimate if the types of jobs are minimum wage and low level.)

QMS appears to have the greatest economic hardship of the six schools. Approximately 58% of the households have no parent working outside the home. That QMS has almost twice as many unemployed parents as the other schools is statistically significant.

On the other hand, FMS and WHS appear to have the greatest frequency of employed parents. These two schools also had the most educated parents, corroborating the inter-relationship between educational attainment, job acquisition and income.

Please refer to Table 12.

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TABLE 12

PARENT'S EMPLOYMENT STATUS

STATUS	ALL N (%)	QMS N (%)	HPHS N (%)	FMS N (%)	WHS N (%)	FES N (%)	BHS N (%)
Employed	225 (68)	16 (42)	88 (70)	21 (72)	68 (77)	10 (59)	22 (63)
Not Empl.	108 (32)	22 (58)	38 (30)	8 (28)	20 (23)	7 (41)	13 (37)

(Chi Sq=16.58, df=5, p=.01)*

3.40 SCHOOL RELATED CHARACTERISTICS

3.41 Attendance At School

Absences:

On the average, BRIDGE students are absent 23 days per school year. (The median value is lower at 16.) This is excessive absenteeism by any standard. It exceeds a full month of school.

There were no statistically significant differences among the six schools on number of absences either. This homogeneity may signal the high risk nature of the BRIDGE population more than any other factor. Whether a youngster is in middle or high school, Weaver or Quirk Middle, there is a very similar pattern of school attendance. It is characterized by chronic, significant absence from school.

The serious nature of absenteeism, particularly for potential drop outs who have been retained at least once, is reflected in the school policy, established by the Board of Education.

> "Students who have reached 20 cumulative absences in a school year will be considered excessively absent...although they (students) may achieve passing grades, students who are excessively absent will be denied academic credit for the school year."
>
> (Hartford Public School, Staff Handbook, 1989-93, p. 16)

This means that a BRIDGE student can be retained for non-attendance factors. For students who have at least one retention in their history, the second increases the probability of dropping out to 100%, (Shepard and Smith, 1990).

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Please refer to Table 13.

TABLE 13

ABSENTEEISM

SCHOOL	MEAN	(SD)	MEDIAN
All	23	(23)	16
QMS	18	(20)	11
HPHS	24	(25)	16
FMS	23	(25)	14
WHS	24	(21)	17
FES	21	(18)	21
BHS	28	(24)	19

(F=.76, df=5,261, p=.58)

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4.00 MEASURING THE IMPACT OF THE BRIDGE PROGRAM: LOCUS OF CONTROL

4.10 THE LOCUS OF CONTROL (LOC) TEST

4.11 Background

During each evaluation period (1986-1990) of the BRIDGE program, participants were administered the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control (LOC) test which is provided for reference as Appendix B. This instrument measures the construct of "locus of control" or perceived control over life by the individual tested.

The LOC test is a variation of the commonly-used version by Rotter (1966) but is designed for use with children. Reading requirements are minimal. During test taking there are 21 items presented to the respondent in the paper and pencil test. Indicated by a checkmark in a designated box,responses are either "yes" or "no".

An overall LOC test score is obtained by summing the total of yes/no responses. (A few items are reverse-coded.) Higher test scores may be interpreted that the youngster perceives life as controlled externally by fate, chance or luck. Lower test scores mean that youngsters feel an internal sense of individual control over his or her life, future or destiny.

A lower LOC score is more desirable from the point of BRIDGE program intervention. Many researchers have shown that dropout populations lack a sense of control over their lives (Eckstrom, etal, 1986; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). Ford (1987) states that a student's perception of self as ineffective and powerless explains why some students drop out of school. Particularly with BRIDGE children (many who are from low-income households), it is important for youngsters to sense control over their lives. BRIDGE attempts to intervene by bringing students toward the perception that they can affect their destiny by persisting in school instead of dropping out.

4.12 Methods

During the beginning of the 1989 school year a sub-group of BRIDGE students was administered the LOC as the pre-testing. The post-testing occurred during June 1990 when the same instrument was administered to students.

Subjects were assigned numeric identification numbers to assure confidentiality. Pre and post tests were matched and the data were numerically coded and entered into SPSS, a statistical software program. Correlated t-tests were executed for overall

scores to determine if statistically significant declines from PRE to POST testing occurred. A probability level of .05 was established to determine statistical significance.

As a note, complete data sets were obtained for 71 BRIDGE students. This small sample size was affected by two factors. First a sample of convenience was utilized where pre and posts tests were collected randomly rather than systematically from the six school sites. Second, each pre and post test must have each of the 21 items answered in order to be utilized. If one item of the 21 is left "blank", data cannot be used due to the calculation of total scores from summing individual test items.

Regardless, the data obtained appears valid and important to consider for two reasons. First, a large percentage of pre and post test sets (72%) were obtained from the QMS/HPHS pair. This pair represents half of the program in terms of overall participants. It has existed since 1985 and likely has the highest degree of program sophistication due to its longevity. Second, the mean (average) pre and post scores were very similar to those obtained by **WORD + NUMBERS RESEARCH** when the firm conducted an evaluation during the 1987-1988 school year. The congruence provides a strong case for validation of the data.

4.20 STATISTICAL RESULTS FROM LOC

4.21 By Sample and Sub-Samples

Statistical results for this section are located in Table 14.

For Entire Sample (N=71):

There were no statistically significant differences on the overall scores of the entire BRIDGE sample from pre to post testing. The mean score of 9.32 at pre-testing did decline at post-testing to 8.54, but not in a statistically significant fashion ($t=1.82$, $df=70$, $p=.07$).

For Transition Sample (n=48):

For the purpose of data analysis a sub-sample was formed and was labeled the Transition Sample. This group consisted of those 7th-9th graders who are the critical target segment that BRIDGE attempts to impact with program intervention. There were 48 students with complete pre and post test sets in the Transition Sample.

A correlated t-test was executed to determine whether a statistically significant decline occurred from pre to post testing on mean scores. The findings demonstrated that a difference oc-

curred and in the hypothesized direction.

At pre-testing the mean score for the Transition Sample was 10.17. At post-testing this score declined to 8.39. This decline was statistically significant (t=2.69, df=47, p=.01) and meaningful from a program intervention standpoint.

Post-Transition Sample (n=23):

A second sub-sample was formed from the remainder of the original sample, again, for data analysis. It was labeled Post-Transition Sample and consisted of 23 students who were 10th graders and above. These students had received the critical intervention of the BRIDGE (that the Transition Group received) and now were persisting through upper grade levels.

A correlated t-test was executed to determine if statistically significant differences occurred for this segment over a year, but none emerged. At pre-testing a mean of 7.55 was obtained and at post-testing the mean of 7.95 was derived. These close means were not statistically different (t=.51, df=21, p=.61). As a note, the Post-Transition sample had scores close to the post-test score of the Transition Group. This fact appears meaningful and will be discussed shortly.

TABLE 14

LOCUS OF CONTROL
PRE TO POST TEST GAINS FOR SAMPLES AND SUB-SAMPLES

GROUP	PRE $\bar{X}$ (SD)	POST $\bar{X}$ (SD)	t-value	df	p	
All	9.32 (3.3)	8.54 (3.4)	1.82	70	.07	NS
Transition	10.17 (3.0)	8.39 (3.1)	2.69	47	.01	**
Post-Transition	7.55 (3.4)	7.95 (4.0)	.51	21	.61	NS

NS=Not Statistically Significant
**=p<.01

4.22 By Males, Females, Blacks and Hispanics

Several follow-up analyses were executed to determine if gender or ethnicity played a part in program impact. The following hypotheses were tested:

1. Do males have lower scores in June?
2. Do females have lower scores in June?
3. Do Blacks have lower scores in June?

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4. Do Hispanics have lower scores in June?

The answer to each of the four questions was "no" as Table 16 documents.

There were no statistically significant results. However, there were meaningful drops in pre to post test scores for males, a high-risk group for dropping out of school. At pre-testing the mean score was 9.25 which dropped to 8.03 at post-testing. Also, the females' scores declined, but only slightly, from a pre-test score of 9.44 to a post-test score of 9.06.

There were no statistically significant declines either for Hispanics or Blacks when ethnicity was used as a categorical variable. Inspection of the mean scores nevertheless was important here.

For Hispanics, a decline on pre and post test scores occurred in the hypothesized direction. A pre-test score of 9.15 dropped to 8.15 at post-testing. By the same token, there was no movement downward of Black students' scores. The pre and post test mean was identical at 9.65. This is troublesome since race functions as a structural predictor in dropping out.

Please refer to Table 15.

TABLE 15

LOCUS OF CONTROL
PRE TO POST TEST GAINS BY GENDER AND ETHNICITY

GROUP	PRE $\bar{X}$ (SD)	POST $\bar{X}$ (SD)	t-value	df	p	
Males	9.25 (3.4)	8.03 (2.6)	1.87	35	.07	NS
Females	9.44 (3.3)	9.06 (4.1)	.66	33	.52	NS
Hispanics	9.15 (3.5)	8.15 (3.2)	1.80	47	.08	NS
Blacks	9.65 (3.0)	9.65 (4.3)	.00	16	1.00	NS

NS=Not Statistically Significant

4.23 Males with Females and Blacks with Hispanics

A third group of statistical analyses was executed to determine if program impact occurred more so for Blacks versus Hispanics or for males versus females. The following hypotheses were tested:

1. Do males have lower scores than females at post-testing

(or vice versa)?

2. Do Blacks have lower scores than Hispanics at post-testing (or vice versa)?

The answer to each of these questions was "no" as Table 17 documents. As a note, there were no statistically significant differences between these comparison groups at pre-testing either.

The results from the independent samples t-tests showed that males and females were similar at pre-testing, but the post-test score for males was lower (8.14) than it was for females (9.32). A similar finding occurred when Hispanics and Blacks were compared. Both groups began with close mean values at pre-testing, but gains by Hispanics in the hypothesized direction occurred. The post-test score for Blacks was 9.63 while that for Hispanics was 8.28.

Please refer to Table 16.

TABLE 16

LOCUS OF CONTROL
COMPARISONS BETWEEN GROUPS

	MALES $\bar{X}$ (SD)	FEMALES $\bar{X}$ (SD)	t-value	df	p	
PRE	9.15 (3.3)	9.49 (3.3)	.45	72	.65	NS
POST	8.14 (2.7)	9.32 (4.1)	1.49	61	.14	NS
	HISPANICS $\bar{X}$ (SD)	**BLACKS** $\bar{X}$ (SD)	t-value	df	p	
PRE	9.12 (3.4)	9.58 (3.0)	.52	69	.60	NS
POST	8.28 (3.2)	9.63 (4.0)	1.55	72	.13	NS

NS=Not Statistically Significant

4.30 INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Researchers have documented in an empirical fashion that dropouts have a sense of powerlessness over their lives. This lack of control is hypothesized to lead to alienation which begins the chain of events - absenteeism, dropping out, and delinquency postulated in the research of Finn (1989) and discussed in Section 1.00 of this report.

The BRIDGE program is an intervention which attempts to stem the

process of disengagement or dropping out. While not conclusive, the results in this section suggest that the program has an impact in this regard on a target group of BRIDGE students. This segment is the one most closely tied to the intense 7th-9th grade transition period, when program intervention is the strongest.

On the Locus of Control test the Transition Sample showed a significant decline in test scores from pre to post testing. These data, although limited by sample selection as well as sample size, were congruent with data obtained in earlier program evaluations by **WORDS + NUMBERS RESEARCH**. This factor contributes to the validity of the data.

Concurrently, the Post-Transition Sample, while not achieving statistically significant declines from pre to post testing, began with a lower pre-test mean score - similar to the post-test score of the Transition Sample. This lower pre-test score was maintained at post-testing.

Although speculative, this may signify that program impact for the Transition sample is maintained for Post-Transition sample. Stated another way, the impact of the program at the critical transition period (7th-9th grade) is maintained as student moves away from intense service delivery and into 10th/11th/12th grades. The sense of control over the BRIDGE student's future may be conceived and established during the transition period, and nurtured enough to survive the "weaning" process that occurs when program services lessen in later grades.

Unfortunately, the limited sample size and non-random, systematic selection of respondents make these results suggestive until further study corroborates them. Yet, they represent some meaningful signs of program effect particularly because the data were derived largely from the QMS/HPHS pair. This site is where program implementation has the longest history, the largest participant group, and possibly more sophistication.

Other results comparing the data on gender and ethnicity did not produce any statistically significant findings.

5.00 ASSESSMENT OF THE BRIDGE PROGRAM BY PARTICIPANTS

5.10 METHODS

An attached page to the Locus of Control test, requested that students answer several open-ended questions about BRIDGE.

1. Why did they become members of BRIDGE?
2. What do they like best about the program?
3. What would they change or improve?
4. Would they recommend the program to a friend?

As was true with the LOC data, the same limitation with respect to sample selection and size pertain to the data reported in this section. However, the strengths apply as well. Most responses are from the QMS/HPHS pair, the largest segment of BRIDGE participants. Also, the findings here corroborate data from a **WORDS + NUMBERS RESEARCH** evaluation report of the program in 1987-88. Please refer to that report for an additional description of findings.

5.20 WHY DO POTENTIAL DROPOUTS JOIN BRIDGE?

There is a clear thread that permeates responses to this question. BRIDGE students perceive something amiss or wrong with their lives that the BRIDGE program might help remedy. In many comments the following areas were mentioned:

1. I am too old for my current grade level.
2. I have failed academically.
3. I lack confidence, maturity.
4. I need help to get ahead in school.

A few actual responses illustrate this perception best:

"To get into, through and out of HPHS."

"Because I thought it would be best for me; and it is."

"Because I wanted to get on with my life."

"Because I thought it would help me in my work and with problems I have."

"They wanted to give me a chance to mature faster...because of my age."

5.30 WHAT DO POTENTIAL DROPOUTS LIKE ABOUT THE BRIDGE PROGRAM?

Clearly, the human dimension of the program is its biggest strength from the perspective of the student. According to participants, they especially like BRIDGE staff, teachers and counselors. This is a program strength since many researchers report that dropouts feel alienated from schools because of a lack of caring (Bullis, 1986).

Comments reflecting this sense of belonging are as follows:

> "I like the people; they really care and help you."
>
> "If you have a problem, you can talk to a BRIDGE counselor about it."
>
> "What I like is everyone because it's like a big community."
>
> "They pay more attention to you."
>
> "They teach you more; they help you when you need it; and you make up the grade you lost."
>
> "...The people around us that tell the students never to drop out of school."

Other features of the program that the BRIDGE students like are the field trips, the opportunities for after-school jobs, and summer employment opportunities.

5.40 WHAT WOULD POTENTIAL DROPOUTS CHANGE TO IMPROVE THE PROGRAM?

The majority of comments were "nothing". Most BRIDGE students are quite satisfied with the program the way it currently is implemented. This same response by a majority of BRIDGE students was elicited in the 1987-1988 data collected by **WORDS + NUMBERS RESEARCH**.

5.50 WHAT WOULD A POTENTIAL DROPOUT TELL A FRIEND ABOUT BRIDGE?

The BRIDGE participants would usher their friend to the right person so that he/she could join. This response demonstrated support for and value of the program by BRIDGE participants. There were no responses that would discourage the friend from joining. Instead, comments were typical of those that follow. BRIDGE students would tell that friend:

> "To join."

"It's a great program!"

"Talk to a counselor/teacher."

"Try it because you never know what's on the other side of the rainbow."

However, some students suggest that the credential be earned by peers before the door to BRIDGE is cracked open. Comments with that theme follow:

"...you must have the qualifications..."

"You have to study hard and believe in yourself."

"Not to mess up because the teachers are trying to help you."

"...you need to have good grades, behave and come everyday."

"...not everybody can be a member..."

5.60 WHY WOULD A POTENTIAL DROPOUT RECOMMEND BRIDGE?

BRIDGE is a program that has given students a second chance, an opportunity that they value highly. Comments tell the story best and underscore the value of BRIDGE to these students.

"Every kid should get this opportunity."

"...The people show they care, not about one person, but all students."

"Because BRIDGE has taught me a lot of responsibility, and if I mess up, I wouldn't get another chance."

"Because it might help them the way it helped me."

"...it helped me a lot through my life..."

5.70 PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

There is a flavor to the comments in this section that support the qualitative impact of the program. The staff of BRIDGE, together with participating teachers and counselors, make the program special in the lives of these potential dropouts. This human element may be the manifestation of commitment, caring, belonging, the element that mitigates the effects of alienation, detachment and disenfranchisement that lead to dropping out.

Although these data are limited by small numbers of responses and non-systematic collection, their value cannot be dismissed in the bigger evaluation picture. There is a theme of "caring" that is critical in warding off the dropout process. The fact that these same data, although qualitative in nature, were reported in 1987-88, corroborates validity.

All qualitative comments from this section are found in Appendix C.

6.00 JOB PERFORMANCE OF BRIDGE STUDENTS

6.10 EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE: AN IMPORTANT PROGRAM COMPONENT

There are two strong incentives that the BRIDGE program offers to its participants to encourage their staying in school. Early promotion from middle school to high school is the first. Placement in subsidized internships or in private sector jobs is the second.

The inclusion of the employment experience in BRIDGE is critical. First, economic factors contribute to the process of dropping out. The Hartford Community Plan for Dropout Reduction revealed that "the most frequent reason for dropping out was economic. The student was in need of employment (p. 12)." The job opportunity that BRIDGE offers provides income to students. Second, extracurricular activities such as employment are said to foster a sense of identification with the school (Miller etal, 1987). The outside activity embodied in work bonds the student to the school via BRIDGE. Third, a BRIDGE student is a potential dropout. If the status changes from student to dropout, the BRIDGE through work experience offers a safety net. Prior work experience is the best predictor of a young person's subsequent ability to find, secure and keep a job.

Internships and part-time jobs are offered to BRIDGE students who attend school, participate in pre-employment/life skills workshops, maintain a level of academic performance consistent with their abilities, and demonstrate mastery of basic employability skills (LaFontaine, 1989).

Usually a student will receive a subsidized internship first as the training ground, and then a private or public sector part-time job will follow. Both of these can begin during the school year and continue through the summer.

6.20 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION: A TELEPHONE SURVEY

This section of the Evaluation Report discusses job performance of BRIDGE students at part-time private and public sector jobs.

An in-depth telephone survey was selected as the method of data collection to assess job performance of BRIDGE students. This methodology was considered the best since quantitative and qualitative data could be collected.

A questionnaire, adapted from and comparable to the tool used in the STW Evaluation, is found in Appendix D.

A list of 38 supervisors, telephone numbers and respective BRIDGE

students/employees were provided to **WORDS + NUMBERS RESEARCH** by the GHCC. During October 1990, Dr. Susan Carroll placed calls to each of the 38 supervisors with one follow-up/second call to boost participation rates.

From the sample of 38 supervisors, 31 were interviewed. This produced a satisfactory participation rate of 82%. Each respondent was assured of confidentiality and that responses would be aggregated with other supervisors' for data analyses and interpretation. A listing of supervisors who were interviewed is found in Appendix E.

6.30 THE JOB PERFORMANCE OF BRIDGE STUDENTS

Supervisors were requested to evaluate their experience with BRIDGE student's job performance. Six aspects were rated on a five-point scale [5=excellent, 3=average, 1=poor]. These job aspects were:

1. Preparedness for work
2. Ability to produce the desired level of work
3. Communication skills
4. Ability to learn the tasks required
5. Motivation or interest in the job
6. Overall performance

Table 17 documents the findings from ratings on the six job aspects.

TABLE 17

EVALUATION OF JOB PERFORMANCE BY SUPERVISORS

ASPECTS	EXCELLENT (5) n (%)	(4) n (%)	ADEQUATE (3) n (%)	(2) n (%)	POOR (1) n (%)
1. Preparedness	3 (10)	7 (23)	9 (30)	8 (27)	3 (10)
2. Production	4 (14)	14 (48)	9 (31)	2 (7)	------
3. Communication	6 (21)	5 (17)	12 (41)	5 (17)	1 (3)
4. Ability to Learn	9 (33)	12 (44)	4 (15)	2 (7)	------
5. Level of Interest	5 (18)	9 (32)	7 (25)	5 (18)	2 (7)
6. Overall Performance	6 (22)	9 (33)	8 (30)	3 (11)	1 (4)

6.31 Overall Performance

In general, the 31 supervisors who participated in the interviews were satisfied with the overall performance of their student employees from BRIDGE. Over half rate the performance as above average and 30% described it as average. Only 4 supervisors (15%) of the 31 felt the job performance was below average.

By the same token, there were three areas where qualitative comments, and to some degree numerical ratings, showed a need for improvement. These areas were:

1. Preparedness for work
2. Communication
3. Motivation/interest in the job

(These are the same three areas where STW employees were rated lower.)

Preparedness For Work:

Two of three supervisors felt that the job preparation of the BRIDGE students was average to below average. This aspect was rated the lowest of all six areas rated by supervisors. The reasons were several.

First, supervisors felt that job preparation skills at interview time needed work. How to conduct oneself at the job interview, particularly speaking up, speaking clearly and asking questions, was advised. The ability to complete a job application correctly, neatly and with proper spelling was also suggested in preparation training.

Second, tardiness and attendance problems were a major disappointment to supervisors. Coming in late, not coming in at all and not calling in to alert a supervisor about either situation was an annoying problem, bordering on unacceptable.

Third, inappropriate behavior at the worksite was mentioned as problematic. Too much chatter and socializing with co-workers, taking and making personal phone calls, and using company services (postage, phone, copy) was exhibited by a few BRIDGE students.

Finally, some students wore inappropriate clothing/hairstyles to the worksite. Jeans and shorts in office settings were not the way to "fit in" smoothly.

[As a note, supervisors were somewhat uncomfortable in providing this feedback. There was a quick acknowledgment that these were students (i.e., kids) and youthfulness was viewed as a factor in accounting for these more juvenile behaviors.]

Communication:

Communication was rated below average by 20% of the supervisors. A large segment (41%) rated communication skills as only average. While no "bad attitudes" were identified (as they were in the STW evaluation), one behavior was perceived as a problem. A segment of BRIDGE employees were extremely shy, quiet and inhibited. They spoke only when they were spoken to, did not ask questions, seek help or solicit feedback on job performance. For some supervisors in large work environments, such limited interaction was viewed as dysfunctional.

Level Of Interest/Motivation:

The third area where some problems emerged was motivation exhibited by the BRIDGE students at work. Fifty percent of the supervisors felt that motivation and level of interest in the job was average to below average. Similar to STW supervisors, this level of interest was reported to decline over time with negative behaviors, such as absenteeism, appearing.

This finding must be juxtaposed to two aspects of the job performance which were rated very highly. The ability to learn tasks was rated "above average" by 77% of the supervisors. 62% rated the ability to produce the desired work "above average".

Clearly, the BRIDGE students are coming to the job with the raw material necessary to learn the job tasks, and then they prove it by producing work. These students, supervisors describe, are bright and have potential. What may damper motivation and interest levels are the types of jobs and tasks they are offered at worksites. As one supervisor stated, "We have to find work for them to do." Another said, "Who gets excited about shredding?"

6.40 PROGRAMMATIC IMPLICATIONS

The most important implication for program improvement relates to the quality of pre-job training. The BRIDGE (similar to STW) needs to enhance and emphasize the preparation that students receive prior to job placement. Specifically, students need to be drilled about:

1. The importance of punctuality and attendance
2. Proper grooming and dressing at work
3. Interview and job application skills
4. Decorum/protocol at worksites

The time that BRIDGE invests in pre-employment training will pay off in three ways. First, students will be able to get and keep after-school jobs. Second, BRIDGE will be able to obtain and

retain job placements as well as develop strong relationships with employers. Third, employers will be required to make less of an up-front investment in orientation/transition for students and use the time to train students on the tasks at hand.

BRIDGE also needs to address the shortcomings of some students in the affective domain. Employees who are introverted, quiet and shy need confidence building, assertiveness training and just general communication skills. Workshops sessions should be conducted with an emphasis "practicing skills" before students are sent out to part-time jobs.

Finally, BRIDGE students need to be apprised of the fact that entry-level (and first time) employment opportunities are often low on the "challenge scale". Yet, good performance together with a probationary period of time provides more chance of job enrichment. At the same time, BRIDGE needs to work out such details with supervisors. Students who have designated abilities and produce should have an opportunity for more challenge. If supervisors could "buy into" this job enrichment plan, the problem of low motivation/interest might be substantially reduced.

6.50 SUMMARY OF JOB PERFORMANCE

Overall supervisors consider BRIDGE students to have the substance and potential necessary to become good employees - the ability to learn the task and the ability to produce outcomes. These dual capabilities are critical. Granted, these students are young and somewhat immature. Flexibility, guidance and supervision are required along with a supervisor's willingness to intervene with patience and confidence to make the necessary changes.

In most cases, supervisors feel that the investment in BRIDGE students is worthwhile.

As a final note, 96% of the supervisors spend time training their BRIDGE employees; but 82% report that no other mandated training than that provided for other high school students is required.

6.60 IMPROVING THE EMPLOYMENT COMPONENT OF BRIDGE

Front-line supervisors were asked about their familiarity with BRIDGE, communication between themselves and the program, and ways that the program could be improved.

Almost every supervisor was familiar with BRIDGE, its name and its function as it related to the employment component. They were not fully aware that BRIDGE was a dropout prevention program. Communication between the program (particularly Glen Fields) and the supervisor was considered open and strong.

There were several suggestions offered by supervisors that would take this important component a step forward in sophistication.

1. Enhance the pre-employment workshop training in the areas previously mentioned.

2. Provide a regular formal evaluation mechanism (on a bi-monthly basis) for supervisors to provide timely feedback to the program on BRIDGE student's job performance. Instead of the "put out the fire" or crisis management approach that happens currently, this was preferred by most supervisors.

3. Explore the possibility of releasing students earlier than 2:30 particularly at worksites when the workday ends at 4:00-4:30.

4. Avoid sending employers 5 to 6 BRIDGE students to interview. Instead, screen the applicants at BRIDGE and send only 2 onward to reduce the amount of time required for employers to interview and screen.

5. Provide interested supervisors with more information on student's background, so that they can be supportive and develop mentoring relationships with the youngster.

6.70 THE NEED FOR BRIDGE

Ninety percent of the supervisors feel that there is a need for BRIDGE's employment component. [The remaining 10% feel that this component is needed "to some degree". The latter group indicated that they were not familiar enough with the entire program to determine need.] A few of the comments were as follows:

"If we reach 300 kids, this snowballs. They [the 300] reach 300 more and in 40 years, we don't need this program."

"These students have a poor family life. What do they know? We can help."

"We are committed to this concept. The students need the money and can work for it through our company."

"There is a difference between BRIDGE kids and kids off the street. The [BRIDGE] kids are a step up."

7.00 THE STATUS OF BRIDGE PARTICIPANTS AT THE END OF THE 1989-1990 SCHOOL YEAR

7.10 BACKGROUND AND METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

What happened to the 452 BRIDGE students at the end of the 1989-90 school year? This question was answered by systematically following-up on the final outcome/status of each BRIDGE participant. A classification scheme was devised by **WORDS + NUMBERS RESEARCH** and implemented by Robin White at the GHCC. The categories for the establishment of outcome were:

1. Promoted to the next grade level.
2. Retained in the current grade level.
3. Transferred to another educational program outside the six participating schools.
4. Moved to another city/town, state, Puerto Rico.
5. Graduated from high school.
6. Mainstreamed back into regular classroom settings.

7.20 OUTCOMES FOR 452 BRIDGE STUDENTS

Data on each BRIDGE student were classified and aggregated by statistical analysis using SPSS, a software package. Demographic and categorical data were applied to the status for further analysis which will be described subsequently.

In general terms, Table 19 describes the final outcome of 452 BRIDGE participants over one school year (89-90).

Approximately 58 students dropped out of school even though they were participating in BRIDGE. This represents 13% of the overall BRIDGE population. By the same token, 287 (64%) students remained in school being promoted to the next grade level or being retained at their current grade level. Seven BRIDGE students (2%) achieved graduation status. Thirteen (3%) were mainstreamed out of BRIDGE and back to the regular classroom setting.

A large proportion of BRIDGE students transferred to educational programs outside of the six participating Hartford public schools. Seventy-six or 17% of the original BRIDGE population continued their education at alternate educational programs such as TAPP, Adult Education, Alternate Education, Prince Tech (n=40) or continued their education in another school district outside the City of Hartford (n=36).

Eleven students (2%) moved out of the city, state or back to Puerto Rico.

Please refer to Table 18.

TABLE 18

STATUS AT END OF PROGRAM YEAR

STATUS	ALL N (%)	QMS N (%)	HPHS N (%)	FMS N (%)	WHS N (%)	FES N (%)	BHS N (%)
Promoted	224 (50)	34 (65)	80 (47)	30 (60)	39 (41)	14 (67)	27 (42)
Not Prom.	63 (14)	----	25 (15)	4 (8)	19 (20)	1 (5)	14 (22)
Drop Out	58 (13)	3 (6)	25 (15)	1 (2)	19 (20)	----	10 (16)
Transfer.	76 (17)	11 (21)	31 (18)	8 (16)	16 (17)	1 (5)	9 (14)
Graduated	7 (2)	----	6 (4)	----	1 (1)	----	----
Moved	11 (2)	----	1 (1)	1 (2)	2 (2)	3 (14)	4 (6)
Mainstrm.	13 (3)	4 (8)	1 (1)	6 (12)	----	2 (10)	----
TOTAL	452	52	169	50	96	21	64

7.30 COMPARISON OF THREE TARGET BRIDGE GROUPS: STUDENTS WHO ARE PROMOTED, RETAINED AND DROPPED OUT

The status of the 452 BRIDGE students at the end of the school year provides part of the picture about what happens to a BRIDGE student over time. Yet, the numbers do not give clues as to why some BRIDGE students drop out, while others stay in school.

Further data analysis was executed to answer that question (to the degree possible) and to look at three important groups of BRIDGE students from the perspective of those critical outcomes. These groups are stratified as follows:

1. BRIDGE students who dropped out (N=58/17%)
2. BRIDGE students who were promoted (N=224/65%)
3. BRIDGE students who were retained (N=63/18%)
4. TOTAL (345/100%)

7.31 Are There Differences By School And By Type of School?

From a review of data it appears that there are differences among

types of schools with respect to their promotion, retention and drop out rates. Please refer to Table 19 which classifies BRIDGE student status by school and school type (i.e., middle/high schools).

TABLE 19

STATUS BY SCHOOL AND SCHOOL TYPE

STATUS	ALL N (%)	QMS N (%)	HPHS N (%)	FMS N (%)	WHS N (%)	FES N (%)	BHS N (%)
Promoted	224 (65)	34 (92)	80 (62)	30 (86)	39 (51)	14 (93)	27 (53)
Retained	68 (18)	----	25 (19)	4 (11)	19 (24)	17 (7)	14 (28)
Drop Out	58 (17)	3 (8)	25 (19)	1 (3)	19 (24)	----	10 (20)
TOTAL	**345**	**37**	**130**	**35**	**77**	**15**	**51**

Indeed, there were statistically significant differences by school type. The middle schools have higher promotion rates than high schools do. Conversely, high schools have higher drop out and retention rates than middle schools. (Chi Sq=36.76, df=10, p=.00).

What is noteworthy are the similarities in rates when schools are segmented by types. There are no statistically significant differences in drop out, retention and promotion rates among the three middle schools. (Chi Sq=6.13, df=4, p=.19) This finding is not surprising since early promotion is a built-in program component at the middle school level.

At the high school level there were no statistically significant differences in drop out, retention and promotion rates among the three schools. (Chi Sq=3.26, df=4, p=.52) About 20-25% of the BRIDGE students at each of the three high schools drop out; almost the same proportions are retained. Over half proceed to the next grade level.

7.32 Are There Differences On Demographic Characteristics?

Age:

Age was examined to determine if there were statistically significant differences on age for BRIDGE students who were promoted, retained and dropped out. (In order to do this, the three middles schools were analyzed together and separately; then, the

same procedure was applied to the three high schools.)

The findings demonstrated that there were no statistically significant differences on age for the drop outs, retained and promoted students in the middle school population of BRIDGE. (F=2.68, df=2,74, p=.07) However, dropouts were older, averaging 15 years of age, while students who were either retained or promoted were younger at 14 years old.

On the other hand, there were statistically significant differences on age for the three groups of students at the high school level (F=6.07, df=2,248, p=.00). High school students who dropped out were significantly older (16) than either those who were retained or those who were promoted. The latter two groups averaged 15 years of age.

Gender:

There were no statistically significant differences when males and females were compared. The drop out, retention and promotion rates were similar (Chi Sq=2.47, df=2, p=.29). Yet, descriptive statistics in Table 20 show females to be at a slightly higher risk for dropping out while males are at higher risk for retention.

TABLE 20

STATUS BY GENDER

STATUS	MALES n (%)	FEMALES n (%)
Promotion	141 (66)	83 (63)
Retention	42 (20)	21 (16)
Dropped	31 (14)	27 (21)

Ethnicity:

There were no statistically significant differences by ethnic group on status. The drop out, retention and promotion rates were similar (Chi Sq=15.26, df=10, p=.12). Again, descriptive statistics in Table 21 suggest that Hispanics may have a slightly higher risk for dropping out, while Blacks have a slightly higher risk of retention.

TABLE 21

STATUS BY ETHNICITY

STATUS	HISPANIC n (%)	BLACK n (%)	WHITE n (%)	OTHER n (%)
Promotion	108 (63)	104 (67)	9 (90)	3 (75)
Retention	28 (16)	34 (22)	1 (10)	------
Dropped	34 (20)	18 (12)	------	1 (25)

Number of Offspring/Children:

There were statistically significant differences among those students who were promoted, retained and dropped out on parental status (F=7.33, df=2,315, p=.00). In each of the three groups the majority have no children of their own. Ninety-six percent of those promoted, 95% of those retained and 81% of the dropouts have no children of their own.

Yet, there are 21 parents. Almost half of those who are parents (43%) are also dropouts as Table 22 documents. This is a red flag with respect to a risk factor.

TABLE 22

STATUS BY NUMBER OF OFFSPRING/CHILDREN

OFFSPRING	PROMOTED n (%)	RETAINED n (%)	DROPPED n (%)
NONE	202 (96)	56 (95)	39 (81)
ONE +	8 (4)	4 (5)	9 (29)

7.33 Are There Differences On Family Characteristics?

Several family background aspects were analyzed to determine if there was a difference with respect to status/outcome. Some important differences emerged from Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) techniques which are reported in Table 23.

The findings document that BRIDGE dropouts have significantly more risk factors than either those retained or those promoted.

1. Dropouts have less frequency of a 2-parent household.

2. Their parent(s) has lower educational levels.

3. There are larger family sizes (i.e., more siblings).

These three factors contribute to the incidence of dropping out for BRIDGE students. Please refer to Table 23.

TABLE 23

ANOVA: STATUS BY FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

FAMILY CHARACTERISTIC	PROMOTED X (SD)	RETAINED X (SD)	DROPPED X (SD)	F-value	df	p
Number of Parents	1.4 (.54)	1.3 (.51)	1.2 (.53)	4.75	2, 329	.01
Ed. Level of Parents	2.0 (.53)	2.0 (.49)	1.6 (.60)	5.87	2, 230	.00
Siblings	2.9 (1.9)	3.4 (1.8)	4.1 (2.5)	5.30	2, 295	.01

Number Of Parents At Home:

The number of one-parent households has meaning for predicting outcomes of BRIDGE students. While the majority of each group had only one parent at home, this occurred more often for drop-outs. Similarly, those students who were promoted had the greatest occurrence of two-parent households. Finally, drop outs had the highest degree of households with no biological parents. Please refer to Table 24.

TABLE 24

STATUS BY NUMBER OF PARENTS AT HOME

NUMBER OF PARENTS	PROMOTED n (%)	RETAINED n (%)	DROPPED OUT n (%)
Two	90 (42)	18 (29)	12 (23)
One	121 (56)	42 (68)	37 (70)
None	6 (3)	2 (3)	4 (8)

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Educational Attainment Of Parent(s):

The educational level of parents also served to separate the three groups on status. Higher educational levels were reported for parents whose children were promoted. This also was true (to a lesser degree) for those who were retained.

For dropouts, however, lower educational attainment for parents existed. The parents of dropouts experienced less high school completion rates. This by itself is an important predictor for success in BRIDGE. Please refer to Table 25.

TABLE 25

STATUS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF PARENTS

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	PROMOTED n (%)	RETAINED n (%)	DROPPED OUT n (%)
None	1 (1)	-----	1 (3)
Some H.S.	21 (14)	7 (15)	12 (34)
High School	111 (73)	35 (76)	21 (60)
College	19 (13)	4 (9)	1 (3)

Number of Siblings:

A third area where significant differences emerged was the number of siblings in the home. Dropouts come from larger households. They frequently have 4 brothers and sisters. Students who are retained have 3. Those promoted have frequently 2. The larger family size appears related to the propensity for dropping out.

Employment Status of Parents:

There were no statistically significant differences in promotion, retention and drop out rates related to the employment status of the parent(s) in the home (Chi Sq=3.24, df=2, p=.20). However, students who are promoted have a greater frequency of parent(s) working outside the home. The parent(s) of the dropout is more often unemployed by comparison. The employment status of retained students lays between the two other groups. Please refer to Table 26.

TABLE 26

STATUS BY EMPLOYMENT OF PARENT(S)

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	PROMOTED n (%)	RETAINED n (%)	DROPPED OUT n (%)
Employed	126 (72)	32 (63)	21 (58)
Not Employ.	50 (28)	19 (37)	15 (42)

7.34 Summary and Programmatic Implications

The information reported in this section is very important to BRIDGE. It alerts the staff to two significant segments of BRIDGE students - those who have the highest degree of success for persisting in school and those who have the highest degree of risk for dropping out.

A profile of the highest risk BRIDGE student is possible to render if one considers the characteristics delineating the dropout. The student resembles the following prototype.

1. Has one parent or no parents at home.
2. Has an unemployed parent.
3. Has a parent with low educational attainment (and probably non-completion of high school).
4. Has at least 3 brothers and sisters.
5. Has a child herself/himself.
6. Is older than BRIDGE peers.
7. Is in high school.
8. May be Hispanic slightly more often.
9. May be female slightly more often.

The successful BRIDGE student has been promoted to the next grade level. This prototype shares many characteristics with the drop out segment; they are not worlds apart. Yet, there are factors that put the odds in their favor. This prototype:

1. Has two parents at home.
2. Has a parent who works outside the home.
3. Has fewer than 3 siblings.
4. Has a parent who graduated from high school.
5. Has no children of their own.

A sub-group of BRIDGE students are those who were retained at their current grade levels. Retained students share several characteristics with both the dropouts and promoted BRIDGE students. In fact, much of the descriptive data in this section places the retained students in the middle between the highest

risk (dropout) and very successful (promoted) student. Their status however makes them distinctly at high-risk and they should be considered a target group for intensive services along with potential BRIDGE dropouts. (This premise will be discussed further in the next section.)

Words · Numbers Research

8.00 COMPARISON BRIDGE STUDENTS: RETENTION VERSUS PROMOTION

8.10 BACKGROUND ON RETENTION

Raising educational standards is of great concern to American schools as well as to the American public. One means of accomplishing this is retaining students. The premise here is that students who are retained will catch up on basic skills and will be at less risk for failure when they proceed to the next grade level.

For every classroom of 30 children it is estimated that 2 children are retained. This yields an annual retention rate of 5-7%. The cumulative rate is closer to 50%. It is estimated that by 9th grade half of all students in U.S. public schools have stayed back at least once. Retention is not a cheap proposition. It is estimated that U.S. school districts pay upwards of $10 billion dollars per year to pay for the extra year of schooling required by retained children. On an individual student basis the cost is $4051 for one repeated grade (Shepard and Smith, 1990).

While philosophically well-intended, retention has received mostly thumbs down in much published literature in education. In 1989, a meta-analysis of 63 controlled studies was reviewed by Holmes. He found that there were more subsequent negative effects on academic achievement when children were retained than when equally poor-achieving children were promoted to the next grade level.

The relationship between retention and dropping out has been clearly established. Dropouts are 5 times more likely to repeat a grade than graduates of high school are. Students who repeat two grades have a 100% probability of dropping out (Association of California Urban School Districts).

Until recently, many individuals pointed to poor academic performance as the reason why children were retained and then dropped out. Grisson and Shepard (1989) found from 3 large scale studies of 20,000-80,000 youngsters that students who repeated a grade were 20-30% more likely to drop out when achievement and other factors related to dropping out were controlled.

Why is this so? One answer is that grade retention is a humiliating status. It was rated in Yamamoto's research (1980) as more stressful than wetting in class or as getting caught stealing. Holmes' study reported that social adjustment, attitudes toward school, behavioral outcomes and attendance become worse for retained students than for controls.

Although still controversial, retention does not appear to be a desirable outcome for any student. For BRIDGE students who have

been retained at least once already, this second retention increases the probability for dropping out to 100%.

The purpose of this section is to examine the promotion/retention rates of BRIDGE students to determine any factors that might contribute to the dropping out process.

8.20 PROMOTION AND RETENTION RATES OF BRIDGE STUDENTS

There were 287 BRIDGE students who remained in the BRIDGE program and in school during the 1989-90 school year. Of those 224 (78%) were promoted to the next grade level while 63 (22%) were retained at the current grade level.

Between High Schools and Middle Schools:

Statistics were applied to the data to determine where retention was occurring. There was significantly more chance of a BRIDGE student's retention if he or she was at one of the three high schools than at the middle school. Since promotion to 9th grade is part of the overall program design, this finding was not a surprise. Please refer to Table 27.

TABLE 27

PROMOTION/RETENTION RATES BY SCHOOL

RATE	ALL N (%)	QMS N (%)	HPHS N (%)	FMS N (%)	WHS N (%)	FES N (%)	BHS N (%)
Promotion	224 (78)	34 (100)	80 (76)	30 (88)	39 (67)	14 (93)	27 (66)
Retention	63 (22)	----	25 (24)	4 (12)	19 (33)	1 (7)	14 (34)

(Chi Sq=21.39, df=5, p=.00)**

Among the Three Middle Schools:

There were no statistically significant differences among schools when compared by type. The middle schools (QMS/FMS/FES) had similar promotion and retention rates (Chi Sq=4.17, df=2, p=.12). Most youngsters at these three schools are moved toward high school, again probably by program design.

Among the Three High Schools:

There were no statistically significant differences among the three high schools on promotion and retention rates either (Chi

Sq=2.29, df=2, p=.32). HPHS, WHS and BHS have similar promotion and retention rates, although HPHS's promotion rate is 10 points higher than either WHS and BHS.

Among Grade Levels:

Since retention rates were higher for the three high schools than for the middle schools, an additional analysis was undertaken to determine which grade level presented the greatest risk. There were no statistically significant differences by grade level but Table 29 shows 9th grade to have the greatest proportion of retentions. The percentages decrease as grade level increases. Please refer to Table 28.

TABLE 28

GRADE LEVEL	PROMOTION N (%)	RETENTION N (%)
9	77 (65)	41 (35)
10	45 (78)	13 (22)
11	22 (85)	4 (15)

(Chi Sq=5.48, df=2, p=.06)

By Number of Days Absent From School:

Extreme absenteeism, reported in Section 3.41, created the potential risk of retention for many BRIDGE students. This in part was due to the school policy that states for 20 (or more) days of absenteeism, there is loss of a full year of credits.

Was absenteeism significantly less for those promoted than for those retained? The answer was "yes" (t=10.51, df=234, p=.00).

There were statistically significant differences in number of days absent for those BRIDGE students retained versus those promoted. Students who passed to the next grade level were absent 14 days on the average (SD=11). Those retained were absent 39 days on the average (21).

Clearly the relationship between retention and absenteeism exists. Poor school attendance accounts in part for some of the reasons why BRIDGE students are retained.

8.30 IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The implications of the findings from promotion/retention data are clear. Students have a greater risk of being retained as soon as they move from the middle school to the high school. This post-transition year is a vulnerable time for BRIDGE students.

For one of three BRIDGE students, the ninth grade poses a major threat of grade retention - again. Approximately 35% are retained after 9th grade. These proportions diminish at 10th grade where the retention rate is 22% and even further at 11th grade with 15% retention. Yet, multiple grade retentions are a fact of life for many BRIDGE students.

Another contributing factor is excessive absenteeism. Retained BRIDGE students are absent over 3 times (39 days) as often as those BRIDGE students who are promoted (14 days). Missing almost two months of school likely takes a toll on school achievement (grades). However, even if school performance is "passing", the HPS does not promote students who are absent over 20 days.

For the 63 students in BRIDGE that were retained in the 1989-90 school year it is likely that they will dropout. This is at least the second grade retention for these students placing them at 100% risk. Not only are these odds against persistence formidable, but when coupled with demographic and family factors, make all BRIDGE students high-risk. Taken together, these odds make retained students a step away from joining the dropout segment. Non-promotion of BRIDGE students in 9th grade may just tip the scale enough to hasten their exit.

8.40 BRIDGE STUDENTS RETAINED IN 1988-89: WHAT WERE THE OUTCOMES?

The grim forecast above for the 1989-1990 retained student population in BRIDGE was put to the test. Data were aggregated on BRIDGE students retained last year (1988-89) to see what happened to them. The hypothesis was that students retained in 1988-89 would constitute more of the dropout BRIDGE population in 1989-90.

Two groups of students were created from the data used in Section 7.00. From the three groups of students (1989-90 promotes, retained and dropped out), two groups were segmented:

1. Those retained in 1988-89 (54)
2. Those promoted in 1988-89 (291)

Results were confirmatory as Table 29 documents. There were statistically significant differences in 1989-90 promotion,

retention and dropout rates between the two groups.

TABLE 29

1989-90 STATUS OF PROMOTED/NOT PROMOTED IN 1988-89

1988-89 STATUS	(89-90) PROMOTED n (%)	(89-90) RETAINED n (%)	(89-90) DROPPED OUT n (%)	N down
Retained	17 (32)	11 (20)	26 (48)	54
Promoted	207 (71)	52 (18)	32 (11)	291
N across	224	63	58	345

(Chi Sq=48.58, df=2, p=.00)**

Of the 58 dropouts in the BRIDGE population for this year, 26 were retained last year. This means that 45% of the BRIDGE dropouts were retained in the previous year. To look at the data another way, every other student retained last year is a dropout this year. The findings corroborate the fact that dropping out is related to retention.

The good news for BRIDGE is this. While 100% probability for dropping out was predicted for the 54 retained students, 50% remained in school; 17 were promoted to the next grade level and 11 were retained. An understatement is the fact that the 17 who were promoted beat tremendous odds.

9.00 THE FIRST BRIDGE COHORT (1985-1986): WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM?

9.10 BACKGROUND AND METHODS

There were 31 students who composed the first cohort of BRIDGE in 1985-86. This group was located at the QMS/HPHS pair of schools. To find out what happened to this important cohort, a retrospective study was conducted.

The methodology was based upon in-depth interviews with individuals who played a major role in the lives of the 31 students. These were:

QMS	HPHS
David Lawrence, Principal	Amado Cruz, Principal
Willie Fagan, Vice Principal	Frank DeLoreto, Guidance
Joan Perry, Teacher	Eli Rodriquez, Guidance
Bill Johnson, Teacher	Ivette Rivera, BRIDGE
Marshall Cohen, Social Worker	Angel Torres, BRIDGE

Additionally, John DiBenedetto, who directs the Adult Education Bureau in Hartford, and Robin White at the GHCC were interviewed because of their important roles in the program implementation. Also, five of the BRIDGE students who were accessible were interviewed one-on-one.

Quantitative data were provided for analysis by Ms. Ivette Rivera, the BRIDGE staff member at HPHS. These consisted of the Locus of Control (LOC) test (described in Section 8.44 and found in Appendix B.) Comparison of 1990 LOC test scores with those produced at the end of the 1986 school year was undertaken. Also, the Attitude Toward School test was administered to determine how students felt at the end of their high school careers. This test is found in Appendix F.

The outcome or status data of the 31 students is as accurate as can be expected given the nature of the population. Whereas one student is enrolled in Adult Education today, he or she might withdraw tomorrow. However, the status on each of the 31 was verified with at least two individuals.

Other parts of this section are more subjective due to the nature of qualitative data. Yet, the themes which emerge are corroborated by other findings previously reported. This gives some validity to the results.

9.20 THE 31 BRIDGE STUDENTS

There were 31 students who composed the first BRIDGE cohort. Participation in BRIDGE began in the 1985 school year at QMS and should have concluded with the receipt of a high school diploma in 1990 from HPHS.

The students in this cohort were selected on the following criteria:

1. age (older than peers at grades 7-8)
2. poor academic performance
3. behavioral problems (absenteeism)

Also, each student was retained once; some were retained twice. National statistics claim that a 50% probability of dropping out of school occurs with one retention. A 100% probability occurs with two grade retentions. Clearly, this cohort was high risk for dropping out of school.

9.30 OUTCOME/STATUS OF THE FIRST BRIDGE COHORT (N=31)

High School Graduates (n=7)

From 31 students in the first cohort, 7 (23%) received a high school diploma as of 1990. However, only 4 graduated from the original "receiver" school, HPHS. The other three received their diplomas through GED or Adult Education programs. All of these 7 students are pursuing post-secondary education/training, all funded by the Day, Berry and Howard law firm. This is occurring at four and two year private institutions, community colleges and proprietary institutions.

Currently Enrolled In Education Programs (n=9)

Nine of the original 31 students (29%) are enrolled in educational programs and are making progress toward acquisition of a high school diploma. Two of the 10 are proceeding in this direction at the original "receiver" school, HPHS. The others are enrolled in Adult Education, Alternate Education or GED programs.

Most of these students have pursued circuitous and discontinuous paths toward diploma attainment. A pattern of dropping in and out of the educational process has characterized this group. It must be acknowledged that the current enrollment status of these students is fragile and subject to change.

By the same token, there is an apparent "connectedness" with education that seems to have been retained under difficult conditions including pregnancy, childcare, employment and other

"pulls" away from continuance. From interview data, this significant linkage was conceived, nurtured and sustained by BRIDGE, specifically BRIDGE staff and HPS staff from QMS/HPHS.

Moved Out Of District (n=7)

A fact of life for urban school populations is mobility of families. At HPHS it is estimated that a 48% mobility rate occurs. For this small group of 31, the statistics apply although to a lesser degree. Twenty-two percent of the original cohort have moved out of the city, out of the state or back to Puerto Rico.

Dropped Out of School (n=8)

Eight students (26%) of the original 31 dropped out of school and are not enrolled in a educational program at this time. Considering the nature of the cohort group, re-entry at some point in time may occur for these BRIDGE dropouts.

Please refer to Table 30.

TABLE 30

OUTCOME/STATUS OF ORIGINAL BRIDGE COHORT (N=31)

GROUP	TOTAL n (%)	HIGH SCHOOL n (%)	ALTERNATE ED. n (%)
Graduated	7 (23%)	4 (57%)	3 (43%)
Continuing	9 (29%)	2 (22%)	7 (78%)
Moved	7 (23%)	-------	-------
Dropped Out	8 (26%)	-------	-------

9.31 Interpretation of Findings on Outcome/Status

Professional research states that students who are retained once have a 50% chance of dropping out. Students retained twice have a 100% chance of withdrawing from school.

There were 16 BRIDGE students who either graduated in 1990 or are currently in educational programs. These can be considered the "successes" in the first BRIDGE cohort. Of the 16, 9 were retained twice and 7 were retained once. This means about 12-13 of the 16 were predicted to dropout while 4-5 were predicted to stay

in school. (The number projected to dropout may be even larger, if other retentions occurred after grade 8.)

What happened to these 12-13 students who were supposed to drop out? They either graduated or are continuing to pursue a high school diploma. In fact, 3 who graduated in 1990 were retained twice before 9th grade. These are signs of program success.

Furthermore, those 8 who dropped out may re-enter, considering the large segment of BRIDGE (7) who have discontinued high school at HPHS, continued at alternate sites, dropped out and dropped back in forming the rough path of non-traditional educational pursuit. Even if the dropouts do not re-enter, 7 from the cohort of 31 yields a dropout rate of 26% (or 33% if those who moved are eliminated). This is far below 50%-100% probability rates for students retained once, twice or three times.

9.40 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ORIGINAL COHORT (31)

In order to preserve confidentiality, general characteristics are offered about the sample of the first BRIDGE cohort. These descriptors were provided during the in-depth interviews and by the review of data on the 31 students.

Those BRIDGE students who dropped out, graduated or are continuing their education are more similar than they are different. The three groups share many of the same characteristics. However, there appears to be a few factors which facilitate a better chance for high school completion.

9.41 General Profile Of BRIDGE Cohort

1. Has exhibited poor school behaviors. (Excessive absenteeism, temper outbursts, suspensions, expulsions)
2. Has exposure to violence and crime. (Gangs, drugs, prostitution, weapons, incarceration)
3. Comes from households with large number of siblings.
4. Has a parent or sibling who dropped out of school.
5. Has been sexually active. (39% were parents at the date of the evaluation.)
6. Has experienced symptoms of the poverty syndrome. (Poor housing, nutrition, hygiene, limited transportation and clothing)
7. Odd mixture of very high and very low-level abilities among 31 students.

9.42 Factors That Pulled Cohort Toward High School Completion

1. Support from BRIDGE staff, guidance and dropout prevention counselors, teachers and administration at QMS/HPHS.
2. Stability and support at home and provided by parent.
3. Day, Berry and Howard mentor system.
4. Employment after school through internship or public/private sector jobs.
5. Extra-curricular activity either sport, club, work/job.
6. Personal composition (drive, motivation).
7. Awareness of educational alternatives (TAPP, Adult Education, Alternate Education, Moylan, GED, etc.).
8. Summer school enrichment program where extra credits may be earned for promotion to the next grade level.

9.43 Factors That Pushed Cohort Away From High School Completion

1. Childcare responsibilities at home (for BRIDGE student's child and/or younger siblings).
2. No parental support or absence of mother/father at home.
3. Economics of poverty (clothing, housing, transportation).
4. Mobility/transience of families.

9.50 CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL SEGMENT (n=16)

9.51 Locus of Control Test Results

Approximately, 12 (75%) of the 16 "Successful" students completed the Locus of Control test. Half were students who graduated in 1990 and half were those continuing their education in alternative sites.

Although not a statistical comparison, an analysis of scores from the LOC test for the 12 students was compared to test scores of the original cohort in 1985-86. The results are reported in

Table 31.

TABLE 31
LOCUS OF CONTROL TEST SCORE: PRE, POST AND POST-POST

TESTING PERIOD	$\bar{X}$	SD
PRE (1985)	10	2
POST (1986)	8	2
POST-POST (1990)	6	3

From the 1985-86 data it is clear that the mean scores declined from pre (10) to post (8) testing in the hypothesized direction. BRIDGE students apparently felt more control over their lives after the first year of BRIDGE program intervention than before they became members. This is a positive result.

In 1990 or four years later, post-post testing data demonstrated a further decline in test scores to a mean of 6. Although this decline occurs with chronological aging, the mean score still appears to be a sign that a sense of control over destiny is occurring for the BRIDGE students during this long time period.

Research has documented that most subjects tested on the construct of Locus of Control become more internal with age. Black youth do not (Nowicki & Walker, 1974). In a study by Rivera and Henderson (1985) on black teenagers, the authors reported that "teenage pregnancy is not so much as wanted or unwanted as it is fatefully accepted as a normative cultural experience for black teenagers," (p. 566). Therefore, a sense of control for BRIDGE students (and one documented over time) is a sign of program impact.

All responses to the 21 items on the LOC are reported as Appendix G. Particularly interesting are a few findings related to the BRIDGE student's influence at home. For items #7, #15, and #21, over half of the students complain:

: It is hard to change my parent's mind (67%).
: It is impossible to get my own way at home (67%).
: I have little to say about what my family decides (58%).

Similar to many teens, these students find parental constraint annoying. But for BRIDGE students what these data may infer is a strong parental impact on the student, a factor that works positively for these students in terms of school persistence.

9.52 Attitude Toward School

The same 12 students were asked a series of questions related to school, grades, teachers and themselves. The items 1 through 25 can be found in Appendix F along with the responses given.

Particularly important to this potential population of dropouts were the following items and responses:

: Only 8% feel it is worthwhile to dropout of school and get a job (Item #1).

: 92% feel it is necessary to have a high school education (Item #9).

: 100% feel it is worthwhile to have good attendance in all classes (Item #18).

: 100% feel it is important to earn good grades in school (Item #21).

On the other hand, some ratings show signs of discontent with education.

: 42% feel that teachers are too hard when they punish students (Item #5).

: 42% feel teachers pick on certain students (Item #10).

9.60 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The predictions for dropping out of school were formidable for the first BRIDGE cohort many of whom were retained sometimes twice, but at least once. Yet, for 16 students signs of success are evident. Seven have graduated with each of the seven in post-secondary training. The other 9 are moving towards high school attainment in an alternate fashion from the traditional public school route.

Factors that characterize these students yield similar profiles regardless of the difference in final outcome. Yet, there are restraining forces that exacerbate the propensity to discontinue/ withdraw/dropout. These are:

1. Large number of siblings or their own children who need childcare at home.
2. Lack of parents, a parent, or parental support at home.
3. Economics of poverty.
4. Mobility/Transience

The BRIDGE "successes" perceive control over their future, a value for education, and the evidence that the means albeit rough and circuitous justifies the end, high school completion. Creative, alternative and flexible pathways must be presented to BRIDGE students so that the goal of high school completion will be in reach of students for whom a non-traditional, non-mainstream educational venture is the rule not the exception.

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10.00 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION

10.10 BACKGROUND

Dropping out of school prior to the 12th grade is distressing to most Americans even though we legally must educate youngsters only until the age of 16.

The purpose of the BRIDGE project, conceived by a joint venture between the membership of the GHCC and the Hartford public school (HPS) system, was to stem the tide of dropouts in the City of Hartford. Since 1985-86 the project has operated, first in QMS and HPHS and then in FMS/WHS and FES/BHS.

The evaluation, conducted by **WORDS + NUMBERS RESEARCH**, covers BRIDGE program implementation during the 1989-90 school year. For a full description of findings, please refer to Evaluation Report. The following is a summary of the salient results.

10.20 WHO RECEIVED BRIDGE SERVICES?

A profile sheet on each BRIDGE student made the following descriptive statistics possible through aggregated data analysis.

10.21 Numbers Served

During the 1989-90 school year 452 students received BRIDGE services.

221 (49%) at the QMS/HPHS pair
146 (32%) at the FMS/WHS pair
85 (19%) at the FES/BHS pair

Almost half of the 452 students were in the 9th grade.

10.22 Profile of BRIDGE Population

:Non-Caucasian majority (47% Black and 47% Hispanic)

:More boys (60%) than girls (40%)

:Chronologically older (by one year) than non-BRIDGE peers

:11% have a child of their own

:Excessively absent from school (16+ days)

:"Middle child" by birth order

:From one-parent households (61%)

:High school completion by parent (59%)

:Employment outside home for one parent (68%)

:High number of siblings (2-3) per household

:Spanish, primary language at home (25%)

10.30 DID THE PROGRAM HAVE AN IMPACT ON LOCUS OF CONTROL (LOC)?

Empirically documented, dropouts have a sense of powerless over their lives. This lack of control leads to alienation which begins the chain of events - tardiness, absenteeism, dropping out and even delinquency (Finn, 1989).

The hypothesis was that a stronger sense of internal self-control would result after BRIDGE intervention. It was tested by administering a sample of BRIDGE students pre/September and post/June LOC tests. The LOC tool measures the perception of control over life either external (fate/chance/luck) or internal (self).

Although no statistically significant differences resulted for all students tested, there was an important exception. For 9th graders, the Transition Sample, there were significantly lower scores at the June testing. This may signify program impact.

A critical segment of BRIDGE, the 9th graders, feel a heightened sense of control over their lives after a year in the program. Rather than the perception that life is something that happens to them regardless of what they do, the 9th graders perceive more internal empowerment over what happens in their lives/the future.

10.40 WHAT DO BRIDGE STUDENTS THINK ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

A sample of BRIDGE students were asked a series of open-ended questions about the program. The results were as follows:

1. Students join BRIDGE to remedy a problem that they perceive about themselves as students. This problem is poor academic performance which has resulted in grade retention. This status subsequently makes the youngster "too old" for his/her grade level. BRIDGE is perceived as correcting this problem particularly with the early promotion to 9th grade.

2. The best aspect of BRIDGE is the human aspect. The students like people affiliated with the program - the BRIDGE specialists, teachers, guidance and support staff, administrators, Day, Berry and Howard mentors and other individuals who facilitate the bonding of the student with the program and thus the school. Students also like the after-school jobs and field trips.

   There is almost nothing students would recommend changing. They like the program "just the way it is."

3. BRIDGE students would recommend joining BRIDGE to peers who are interested.

10.50 HOW DO BRIDGE STUDENTS PERFORM AT AFTER-SCHOOL JOBS?

31 supervisors were interviewed by phone to assess performance of BRIDGE students. Overall, supervisors consider the students to have the substance and potential to become good employees - the ability to learn the tasks and the ability to produce outcomes.

At the same time, flexibility, guidance, and supervision are required along with willingness to intervene with patience in making necessary changes in improving performance.

The BRIDGE program can make changes in the following areas:

: more preparation/orientation prior to job placement in areas such as job application/interviewing skills, proper decorum and attire, attendance requirements at work.

: better communication skills for the introverted student such as assertiveness training, confidence building and general verbal skill development.

: more positive and realistic attitudes about the nature of entry level jobs.

: institutionalization of a more formal, periodic evaluation scheme on employee performance instead crisis intervention.

: pre-screening of potential employees by BRIDGE so that the supervisor's interview time is reduced.

: exploration of earlier release time from school.

: provision of more background information on the student to interested supervisors so that mentoring can occur.

10.60 WHAT HAPPENED TO THE 452 BRIDGE STUDENTS AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR?

A retrospective study on the status of BRIDGE students was conducted. From these data, descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to determine the target profiles of key segments of BRIDGE students.

10.61 Final Status For The 452 BRIDGE Students

224	(50%)	were promoted to the next grade level
63	(14%)	were retained in the current grade level
7	(2%)	graduated, completed high school
58	(13%)	dropped out of school
76	(17%)	transferred to another educational program (Alternate Education, GED, Prince Tech.) or another school district
11	(2%)	moved out of town, state, or to Puerto Rico
13	(3%)	returned to regular classroom setting

Students in BRIDGE are more similar than different on characteristics studied in this evaluation. Yet, an attempt to profile the key segments of the BRIDGE population may help the program in service delivery.

10.62 A Profile Of The BRIDGE Student Who Drops Out

:Has one parent or no parents at home
:Has an unemployed parent
:Has a parent with low educational attainment and non-completion of high school
:Has a large number of siblings, often 3 brother/sisters
:Has a child of his/her own
:Is older than BRIDGE peers in same grade level
:Is in high school
:May be female, slightly more often
:May be Hispanic, slightly more often

10.63 A Profile Of The Promoted BRIDGE Student

:Has two parents at home
:Has a parent who works outside the home
:Has fewer siblings, possibly one or two
:Has no child of his/her own
:Has a parent who graduated from high school

10.64 A Profile Of The Retained BRIDGE Student

:Resembles both dropouts and promoted students on characteristics, mentioned previously
:More often a ninth grader
:Excessively absent from school/over 20 day limit

10.70 WHAT HAPPENED TO THE STUDENTS RETAINED THE PREVIOUS SCHOOL YEAR (1988-89)?

A retrospective study was conducted to determine the 1990 status of BRIDGE students (N=54) who were retained during the previous school year (1988-89). This retention was their second, making the probability of dropping out 100%. The findings document that of the 54 students, half or 26 did drop out in 1990.

BRIDGE STUDENTS RETAINED IN 1988-89 (n=54)

17 (32%) were promoted in 1989-90
11 (20%) were retained in 1989-90
26 (48%) dropped out in 1989-90

Of the 58 students who dropped out in 1990, the previously retained students constitute 45% of the total dropout population.

1989-90 DROPOUTS (n=58)

26 (45%) were retained in 1988-89
32 (55%) were promoted in 1988-89

10.80 WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ORIGINAL/FIRST BRIDGE COHORT: 1985-1986?

A retrospective study was conducted to determine the status of the first cohort of BRIDGE students (N=31). The outcomes were as follows:

10.81 Current Status For First Cohort

7 (23%) graduated from HPHS(4) or alternative programs(3)
9 (29%) are pursuing high school completion through alternative education programs(7) or at HPHS(2)
7 (23%) have moved out of town, state or to Puerto Rico
8 (26%) have dropped out

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10.82 Factors Promoting High School Completion For Cohort

: Support from BRIDGE staff, teachers, guidance counselors, dropout counselors, administration at QMS/HPHS
: Relative stability at home and provided by parent
: Day, Berry and Howard mentor support system
: Employment via after-school job or internship
: Extra-curricular activity such as sport, job, club
: Personal drive/motivation
: Awareness of educational alternatives (TAPP, Alternative Education, GED, etc.)
: Summer school enrichment programs where extra credits are earned

10.83 Factors Restraining High School Completion For Cohort

: Childcare responsibilities for own child and/or siblings
: No parental support or absence of mother/father
: Economics of poverty (clothing, housing, transportation)
: Mobility/transience of family

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11.00 CONCLUSION

For Hartford youngsters BRIDGE intervenes at an important juncture in their lives, a time when the difference between success and failure is narrow. Through program services BRIDGE attempts to keep all of the factors that influence the decision to drop out in a careful (albeit fragile) balance. BRIDGE's ability to achieve this goal has resulted in programmatic successes both hard and soft.

Hard success translates into the promotion of youth to the next grade level. These are the same youngsters who at the time of program entry were classified as being high risk for dropping out of school. Statistically, 65% of the 1989-90 BRIDGE students were promoted to the next grade level at the end of the school year. These students had a 50-100% probability of dropping out due to previous grade retentions alone, not including demographic risk factors.

Achievement becomes even more tangible when the status of the BRIDGE students who were retained in the 1988-89 academic year is considered. Despite a 100% probability for dropping out, approximately one-third of these students subsequently were promoted in 1989-90. This is a sign that BRIDGE is able to be effective with a target segment burdened with the most formidable odds.

BRIDGE also has demonstrated the ability to increase and maintain a student's "connectedness" to school. While this may be considered a softer indication of success when juxtaposed with statistical data, it is a requisite factor in breaking the dropping out or withdrawal process described by Finn (1989).

The findings on the LOC testing, the survey of job performance, and even the words of BRIDGE students themselves, all point to a sense of hope and achievement for these youngsters. For them, BRIDGE represents the chance to break the inevitable, to be promoted, to get a job, and ultimately to influence positive outcomes for themselves. While credit for this impact cannot be assigned to BRIDGE alone, it is clear that the program plays a central role.

Regarding the future of BRIDGE, there are a few critical areas that demand creative, aggressive solutions.

MONITOR EXCESSIVE ABSENTEEISM:

First, the excessive absenteeism of BRIDGE students needs to be closely monitored and studied to learn more about this serious problem. Unlike suburban counterparts, the urban student may miss school for reasons other than his or her own illness. These may

range from lack of clean clothes to baby-sitting obligations to no transportation. The reasons are complex and significant, and need to be studied for possible interventions. A Task Force to address the absenteeism of BRIDGE students may be a systematic way to begin understanding this problem.

Why is absenteeism so serious a concern? The data in this evaluation suggest a stepwise relationship between high absenteeism and dropping out; absenteeism leads to retention and retention leads to dropping out. Those BRIDGE students who were retained had significantly more absences than those who were promoted. Those who were retained in 88-89 made up half of the dropouts in 89-90.

Excessive absenteeism of BRIDGE students raises and waves a red flag, a sign that the process of withdrawal is evolving for the BRIDGE student. Early intervention to break the chain of absences plays a key part in stemming the tide of dropping out for these youngsters.

DEVELOP MORE ACADEMIC SUPPORT OPTIONS:

Second, there is a need for more academic supportive services in BRIDGE. Due in part to the high absenteeism and also multiple grade retentions, BRIDGE students need help with school work to keep up with their peers and thus pass to the next grade level. The summer school program that BRIDGE offers is an excellent adjunct. More of the same is needed.

Peer tutoring after school, enrichment workshops on Saturdays and vacations, homework assistance by mentors and even willing employers, and other ways to stimulate school performance is needed to remedy the academic deficiencies that, together with absenteeism, create grade retention.

EXPAND MENTORING TO ALL BRIDGE STUDENTS:

Third, support in the affective domain is essential to facilitate the "connectedness" that keeps students from withdrawing from school. Mentoring is an excellent vehicle to achieve the connection.

According to Dr. Susan Weinberger, past president of the National Association of School Business Partnerships and author of the Mentor Handbook, mentoring is a dropout prevention program geared to instill positive values in its target population. She claims that there are improved attendance rates as well as reports by teachers that children who come to class are willing to take risks and do better.

The 1986 cohort group (and individuals associated with that seg-

ment) identify the Day, Berry and Howard mentor support system as an exceptional key in linking the BRIDGE students to education.

Developing mentoring systems for the large BRIDGE population is a formidable but necessary task for the program. One avenue may be through the employer pool. During the employer survey in this evaluation study it was apparent that some employers would be willing to play a deeper and more meaningful role with BRIDGE than simply offering a job to the student. When this opportunity exists, a mentor may be captured.

DEVELOP ALTERNATIVE ROUTES FOR HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION:

One important finding from this evaluation was that the traditional course toward high school completion did not fit a segment of the BRIDGE population. Both the 1986 cohort group and approximately 17% of this year's cohort pursue a circuitous, discontinuous, and erratic pattern toward high school completion. Dropping in and out of the Hartford public schools, GED programs, TAPP, adult education programs, alternate education, and Prince Tech, or re-locate, is the norm for some BRIDGE students.

BRIDGE should serve as a clearinghouse for educational alternatives. The development of a reference book that lists all the alternative educational programs in the Greater Hartford area may help to get the message out. Furthermore, strong relationships with administrators, counselors and faculty at these alternative educational sites is wise. This would open up communication channels whereby the status of a BRIDGE enrollee may be monitored effectively and, more important, supported over time. This comprehensive effort will provide a safety net much needed by the BRIDGE student who marches to the beat of a different drummer. For that segment, the traditional route toward high school completion is not the best fit.

FINAL COMMENT:

A summative comment is in order. Certainly, BRIDGE is only one piece of the programmatic whole required to alleviate the dropout problem that all schools, not just Hartford, face. BRIDGE, however, offers concentrated, focused services to a high risk group of students at a critical time in their lives. The variety of its components - supportive services, networking and referral, life skills training, employment, summer remediation and other services - provide a comprehensive approach for dealing with this complex problem.

Given the results of this as well as former evaluations, it is clear that BRIDGE leaves a positive mark on those it involves. The BRIDGE offers youngsters one final, optimum chance to avoid a

disappointing future.

For those who must determine whether the future of BRIDGE spells continuance, retrenchment or discontinuance, an excerpt from American Demographics seems appropriate. The article, entitled "Enlightened Orphans" states the following:

> "Americans say they are tired of throwing money at problems. But their choice has come down to $4,000 a year for one child in school or $17,000 a year for one prisoner in jail (62% of whom are high school dropouts). Even a third grader, on whose small shoulders now rests the political careers of governors and the fate of America's future productivity, can tell you which is the better investment."
>
> (March 1990, p.16)

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APPENDIX A

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AT-RISK STUDENTS

Stemming the Tide of Dropouts

BY HERNAN LaFONTAINE
Superintendent, Hartford, Connecticut, Public Schools

School dropouts deny themselves the pleasures, experiences, and opportunities an education can bring. Furthermore, dropouts often are a bane for an entire community. Instead of contributing to society, dropouts drain available resources.

The Hartford, Conn., public school system, assisted by the Greater Hartford Chamber of Commerce and area businesses, succeeded in stemming the tide of dropouts which so commonly plagues urban school districts.

How was it possible for our dropout rate to decline 3.3 percentage points to 8.3 percent in 1987-88, marking the lowest rate in a decade and the most significant annual reduction ever in the number of dropouts?

Project Bridge

We credit a major collaborative venture between the school system and the Greater Hartford Chamber of Commerce.

Project Bridge was started in 1985 as a pilot program for 25 students at Hartford's Quirk Middle School. Project Bridge now serves 335 pupils at three middle and three high schools.

Students chosen are those most likely to drop out of school. We look for chronic absenteeism, multiple grade retentions, repeated disciplinary referrals, negative attitude toward school, low self-esteem, and substandard levels of achievement in basic skills subjects.

Strong Incentives

Project Bridge participants, beginning in the seventh grade, receive two strong incentives to remain in school: early promotion from middle school to high school and placement in a subsidized employment internship program.

The middle school students receive instruction in reading, mathematics, language arts, social studies, and science. A 12-to-1 pupil-teacher ratio enables the staff to provide individualized instruction and remediation, as well as personal attention.

Regular academic coursework is supplemented with pre-employment and life skills workshops conducted by a Project Bridge employment specialist.

Project Bridge participants who meet program objectives are promoted to the ninth grade. Those youngsters who fall short are promoted to the eighth grade where they remain in the dropout prevention cluster for at least another marking period.

At the high school level, Project Bridge students attend regular classes, but meet as a group with the Project Bridge employment specialist and an advancement counselor for one period each day. These two staff members help the youngsters make a successful transition from middle school to high school.

Businesses Get Involved

Paid job internships are offered to Project Bridge participants who attend school and program workshops regularly, maintain a level of academic performance consistent with their abilities, and demonstrate mastery of basic employability skills.

Project Bridge also includes a summer component in which students receive remedial instruction in addition to continuing their paid internships.

The "I Have a Dream" program provides as additional incentive for Project Bridge students to remain in school. Two area law firms and an accounting firm each are sponsoring a class for Project Bridge pupils.

The firms are committed to providing financial assistance to students who graduate from high school and wish to continue their education at a college or university. Employees of those firms serve as mentors, role models, and advisers to the Project Bridge youngsters.

Everyone Wins

Everyone wins in a collaborative dropout prevention project. The business community benefits because it has a better educated, better prepared pool of potential employees. The school system gains because it is able to keep students in school and thus do the job with which it is charged.

And, most of all, the youngsters profit because they receive another opportunity to become productive, contributing adults.

INSTRUCTION

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APPENDIX B

This is not a test. You will not receive a grade. The **BRIDGE** program cares about you. What you think and feel is important to us.

Please complete these questions as honestly as possible. Try to answer every question, but don't spend too much time on any one. For the following questions, check **(X) YES**, if you agree; or **NO**, if you don't agree.

1.	Do you believe problems will solve themselves if you just don't fool with them?		
2.	Are you blamed for things that just aren't your fault?		
3.	Do you feel that it doesn't pay to try hard because things never turn out right anyway?		
4.	Do you feel that a parent listens to what their children have to say?		
5.	When you get punished, is it usually for no good reason at all?		
6.	Most of the time do you find it hard to change a friend's (mind) opinion?		
7.	Do you feel that it's really hard to change your parent's mind about anything?		
8.	Do you feel that when you do something wrong there's not much you can do to make it right?		
9.	Do you believe that most kids are just born good at sports?		
10.	Do you feel that the best way to handle most problems is just not to think about them?		
11.	Do you feel that when a kid your age decides to hit you, there's not much you can do to stop him or her?		

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12.	Have you felt that when people were mean to you it was usually for no reason at all?		
13.	Most of the time, do you feel that you can change what might happen tomorrow by what you do today?		
14.	Do you believe that when bad things are going to happen, they happen no matter what you try to do to stop them?		
15.	Most of the time is it impossible to get your own way at home?		
16.	Do you feel that when somebody wants to be your enemy, there's little you can do to change it?		
17.	Do you usually feel that you have little to say about what you get to eat at home?		
18.	Do you feel that when someone doesn't like you there's not much you can do about it?		
19.	Do you feel that it's useless to try in school because most kids are just smarter than you are?		
20.	Do you believe that planning ahead makes things turn out better?		
21.	Most of the time, do you feel that you have little to say about what your family decides to do?		

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APPENDIX C

WHY DID YOU BECOME A MEMBER OF THE BRIDGE PROGRAM?

To be put in my proper grade. (16)

I think it was because of my age. (6)

Because they picked me. (4)

I wanted to skip a grade. (3)

I stayed back a year. (3)

I needed help. (3)

To get ahead in school. (2)

I asked a teacher to put my name on the list.

I failed.

I became a member of the BRIDGE program because I think it was a good opportunity for me and I took it. It sounded like a good program.

I like the BRIDGE program.

To jump to public school and catch up because I stayed back in Parkville.

For better education.

Because of the people.

I came into the BRIDGE program because I knew it would help me a lot.

Because my counselor thought it was best for me.

I didn't have a choice. I was put there.

I was asked to be part of the program.

So I would have more confidence in myself.

They just called me and here I am.

Because I needed help and I thought it will be fun. It is fun.

To get into, through and out of HPHS.

Because I thought that it would be the best for me, and it is.

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For extra credits.

Because naturally I want to go to college and I'm really one cool dude.

Because I wanted to get on with my life.

Because it seemed fun and educational.

The opportunities they gave me!

Because I thought that BRIDGE could help me in my work and the problems I have.

I think because they wanted to give me a chance to get mature faster and maybe because of my age.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT BRIDGE?

Everything. (10)

The teachers/counselors. (10)

The trips. (6)

The people. (3)

They help you to get a good job and also help you a lot in school. (3)

The privileges/freedom we get. (3)

Getting skipped a grade. (2)

I like the people that really care and help you. (2)

The opportunity. (2)

They pay more attention to you. (2)

They help you with problems.

It's a fun program to be in.

There really isn't anything I like about it, but that it's all right.

Really nothing. Only some of the trips.

You can get a summer job and get late passes to your class.

The best thing that I like about BRIDGE is that it is a program that lets you be yourself and they look for the students who do this best.

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It gave me a chance to get a job very fast.

It helps me with the problems at school, like catching up.

If you have a problem, you can talk to a BRIDGE counselor about it.

I like the staff, students and especially the trips.

The trips, teachers, girls and jobs we can get.

What I like is everyone because it's like a big community.

Nothing.

The activities.

They teach you more. They help you when you need it and you make up the grade that you lost.

Trips to colleges and person-to-person counseling.

The trips, the counselor, and helping each other.

I like the teachers and the counselors, but some teachers have the nerve to treat us BRIDGE students like nothing.

When we go on a trip that is educational and the people around us that tell the students never to drop-out of school.

The education.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO TO IMPROVE OR CHANGE BRIDGE, IF YOU COULD?

Nothing. (35)

Have more trips. (9)

They should start us at the beginning of the year. (2)

Try to improve my grades.

I don't know.

Take other students instead of the same students on trips.

The only thing that I would change about BRIDGE is that I would not pick people who are not willing to try and try hard.

Make it bigger.

I think we should get more involved with different colleges. For example, go on a tour of the whole campus and stay overnight,

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just to have a feel of what it is like to go to college.

Have Spanish teachers for students who can't speak English.

Keep studying.

Well, first I would fire the teachers of HPHS that do not appreciate BRIDGE students and then I'll make all BRIDGE students understand life.

Pay more!

IF YOUR FRIEND WANTED TO BECOME A MEMBER OF BRIDGE, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO THAT FRIEND?

Talk to a counselor/teacher. (19)

To join. (4)

Go ahead. (4)

It's a great program! (2)

You should try and get in. (2)

Don't know. (2)

That it's easy and come and join.

Go to the school and try to get information on it.

I really couldn't say anything to him or her, just that they will be selected to go.

I would tell her about how great it is and to talk to my BRIDE counselor about it.

Yes, and you are going to be happy.

I would say if you want to become a BRIDGE student you must have the qualifications, but also it's a great program and it's fun.

That HPHS is the best school to teach you when you want to learn and get good grades.

Try it, because you never know what's on the other side of the rainbow!

You have to study hard and believe in yourself.

To take the chance and don't mess up.

It is good for you and it can help you in some ways.

Nothing.

Not to mess up because the teachers are trying to help you.

You can't.

If you stayed back twice, you should go to the BRIDGE program and go everyday.

Talk to your guidance counselor. You need to have good grades, behavior and come everyday.

I would tell them there are things in BRIDGE that there aren't in a mainstream high school.

That not everybody could become a member of BRIDGE.

Stay back twice or more than twice and enjoy life in BRIDGE.

I would give some advice and tell him to fit-in with the program.

WHY?

The counselor can help you and give you information. (9)

They find you a job. (4)

It's fun. (3)

Don't know. (2)

If he stayed back more than once or if he's too old to be in the grade level he is now. (2)

Because I can't say, "here is a spot in the BRIDGE program."

Because I want to see his face when everything turns out the way I didn't say.

To help and talk about him or her.

Because the counselors are the best people. Because they like your parents. They help you and treat you for everything.

Because that is what I did.

Helps you get in your right grade.

You get classes that push you to do better.

BRIDGE gives you a chance, and also it's fun. The people also show that they care, not about one specific person, but all students.

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Because BRIDGE has taught me a lot of responsibility and if I mess up, then I wouldn't get another chance.

Because he wants to be in BRIDGE.

Because it might help them the way it helped me.

Because it's true.

Because BRIDGE helped me a lot through my life and I think it will help others that are willing to join in the future.

You'll be in a grade that you deserve to be in.

Why not?

BRIDGE is fun to be in!

Because he's not old enough.

They help you.

BRIDGE program speaks for itself.

You get to do a lot of stuff that you wouldn't be able to do on a regular basis.

Because, I got it all from BRIDGE!

Because you get special attention.

Because they help you and it's fun. I love it!

It helps you get ahead in school and meet new friends.

BRIDGE helps kids that are in trouble in the streets or in school and helps you pass.

Every kid should get this opportunity.

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APPENDIX D

JOB PERFORMANCE QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questions represent a way to give helpful, concrete feedback to the STW/BRIDGE programs. Your input will be strictly anonymous and confidential. Your comments will be aggregated with many other supervisors who will be participating. Please be as frank and specific as possible.

****

With your overall experience with STW/BRIDGE as background, please rate students using a 5 point rating scale. A 5 represents "excellent"; a 3 means "adequate"; and a 1 means "poor". Then, describe why you chose the rating you did.

1. Student's initial orientation/preparedness to the world of work (how to dress, groom, attendance, promptness etc.)

   5 4 3 2 1 COMMENT:

2. Student's ability to produce the required work (follow directions, get required work done, produce neat and satisfactory work).

   5 4 3 2 1 COMMENT:

3. Student's communication with supervisor and co-workers (ask for help and feedback, interaction with you and co-workers).

   5 4 3 2 1 COMMENT:

4. Student's ability to learn task requirements at work (grasp job concepts, work, independent of supervisor).

   5 4 3 2 1 COMMENT:

5. Student's level of interest and motivation in job (enthusiasm and appreciation for the job).

   5 4 3 2 1 COMMENT:

6. Student's overall performance.

   5 4 3 2 1 COMMENT:

7a. Does your company/organization provide training to STW/BRIDGE students?

   ___yes ___no

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7b. Is the training equal to or more than the amount of training given to other non-STW/BRIDGE students?
___equal to ___more than

7c. Comment on the training required/given.

8. What are the strengths of STW/BRIDGE?

9. What areas need improvement?

10. What recommendations do you have?

11. Is there a need for this type of program?

____ yes
____ to some degree
____ no

12. Why or why not?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION OF TIME!

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APPENDIX E

SUPERVISORS OF BRIDGE STUDENTS: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

	NAME OF SUPERVISOR	WORKSITE
1.	Sandra Waterman	Probate Court
2.	Sue Levine	LOB
3.	Vivian Donaroma	Coopers & Lybrand
4.	Dave Miles	CM Alliance
5.	Ron Yuen	CM Alliance
6.	Mary Alice Sullivan	Traveler's
7.	Fernando Morales	ACE Printing
8.	Linda Singer	Northeast Utilities
9.	Peter Wade	GHCC
10.	Stephanie Rice	CRRA
11.	Pam Bliss	Ernst & Young
12.	William Griswold	Cedar Hill Cemetery
13.	Ellen Smith	U-Design
14.	Allison Lewis	Murtha, Cullina
15.	Keith Sullivan	Murtha, Cullina
16.	Donna Gianfriddo	UCONN Law
17.	Michael Stokes	YMCA
18.	Colleen Wood	Aetna
19.	Don Walsh	Imagineers
20.	Diane Green	Society for Savings
21.	Jay Dalo	Blue Ridge Hospital
22.	Cheryl Niland	State Dept. Revenue Services
23.	Mike Kruzer	State Dept. Revenue Services
24.	Sue Mango	Edwards Warehouse
25.	Cyrillia Maxwell	McDonald's
26.	Maria Teixerira	C-Town Supermarket
27.	Mary Fagan	Updike, Kelly & Spellacy
28.	Sandra Kern	Aetna
29.	Damaris Rosemond	Aetna
30.	Miriam Jones	Paul Harris
31.	Tina Peterson	Hartford Hospital

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APPENDIX F

ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOL QUIRK STUDENTS

	VARIABLES	POSITIVE %	NEGATIVE %
1.	It is worthwhile to dropout of school and get a job.	92% no	8% yes
2.	Teachers are not fair when they give grades.	75% no	25% yes
3.	School subjects are very interesting.	90% yes	10% no
4.	Students should try becoming school leaders.	100% yes	0% no
5.	Teachers are too hard when they punish students.	58% no	42% yes
6.	Students in school are unfriendly to me.	92% no	8% yes
7.	The principal and vice principal help the students.	83% yes	17% no
8.	It is worthwhile to work hard and become interested in every school course.	83% yes	17% no
9.	It is necessary to have a high school education.	92% yes	8% no
10.	Teachers pick on certain students.	58% no	42% yes
11.	It is good to take part in class discussion as much as possible.	100% yes	0% no
12.	It is a good thing to be in a gang while going to school.	92% no	8% yes
13.	Students should feel free to become school leaders.	100% yes	0% no
14.	Teachers understand the problems of students.	73% yes	27% no
15.	Students should feel free to disagree with teachers.	92% yes	8% no

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APPENDIX F (CONTINUED)

ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL
QUIRK STUDENTS

VARIABLES	POSITIVE %	NEGATIVE %
16. It is good for friends to help me make up my mind.	67% no	33% yes
17. It is worthwhile to take part in school activities.	92% yes	8% no
18. It is worthwhile to have a good attendance in all classes.	100% yes	0% no
19. Teachers care about their students.	90% yes	10% no
20. A student with problems can get help from a counselor.	92% yes	8% no
21. It is important to earn good grades in school.	100% yes	0% no
22. It is more important to have a good time in school than to study and learn.	100% no	0% yes
23. Teachers should give most of their attention to good students.	83% no	17% yes
24. School subjects are useful.	73% yes	27% no
25. It is more important to do well in sports than in class.	100% no	0% yes

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APPENDIX G

LOCUS OF CONTROL
QUIRK STUDENTS

	VARIABLES	NO %	YES %
1.	Do you believe problems will solve themselves if you just don't fool with them?	100%	0%
2.	Are you blamed for things that just aren't your fault?	50%	50%
3.	Do you feel that it doesn't pay to try hard because things never turn out right anyway?	75%	25%
4.	Do you feel that a parent listens to what their children have to say?	83%	17%
5.	When you get punished, is it usually for no good reason at all?	75%	25%
6.	Most of the time do you find it hard to change a friend's (mind) opinion?	50%	50%
7.	Do you feel that it's really hard to change your parent's mind about anything?	33%	67%
8.	Do you feel that when you do something wrong there's not much you can do to make it right?	75%	25%
9.	Do you believe that most kids are just born good at sports?	67%	33%
10.	Do you feel that the best way to handle most problems is just not to think about them?	92%	8%
11.	Do you feel that when a kid your age decides to hit you, there's not much you hit you, there's not much can do to stop him or her?	92%	8%
12.	Have you felt that when people were mean mean to you it was usually for no reason at all?	83%	17%
13.	Most of the time, do you feel that you can change what might happen tomorrow by what you do today?	83%	17%

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APPENDIX G (CONTINUED)

LOCUS OF CONTROL

QUIRK STUDENTS

	VARIABLES	NO %	YES %
14.	Do you believe that when bad things are going to happen, they happen no matter what you try to do to stop them?	58%	42%
15.	Most of the time is it impossible to get your own way at home?	33%	67%
16.	Do you feel that when somebody wants to be your enemy, there's little you can do to change it?	58%	42%
17.	Do you usually feel that you have little to say about what you get to eat at home?	67%	33%
18.	Do you feel that when someone doesn't like you there's not much you can do about it?	75%	25%
19.	Do you feel that it's useless to try in school because most kids are just smarter than you are?	100%	0%
20.	Do you believe that planning ahead makes things turn out better?	92%	8%
21.	Most of the time, do you feel that you have little to say about what your family decides to do?	42%	58%

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